

Prairie Soldier

NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Operation Iraqi Freedom: Round Two



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Tearful Goodbye: Staff Sgt. Robert Schwanz hugs his teary-eyed daughter Sierra, 9, during a farewell ceremony for his unit, Detachment 1, Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion, at Lexington on Jan. 13. **See story and photos on 7.**

Air refueling wing turns page to new chapter in January

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

After five years of near continuous combat operations and deployments, the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing began a new chapter, Jan. 10, when Col. Steve Adams assumed command from newly promoted Brig. Gen. Robert Bailey.

According to Adams, who earlier that day had stepped down from command of the 155th Operations Group, he felt overwhelmed by the assignment.

"When I enlisted in the United State Air Force in 1972, I could not nor would have allowed myself to imagine that I might one day find my self serving as a wing commander," said Adams, only the seventh person to ever command the Air National Guard's second-oldest unit.

"What an opportunity to command a premier organization whose people continue a tradition established by our unit's forefathers...a tradition of selfless service to their state and nation."

In assuming the helm of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Adams takes command in a time of momentous changes and challenges, said Maj. Gen. Roger P. Lempke, adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard who presided over the ceremony.

Lempke added that he has complete faith that Adams is the right person to command the unit.

"Today, you assume command of the best," said Lempke. "And we know that you're going to make it better."

Lempke said that during the five years that Bailey commanded the unit – some of the most traumatic in the history of the organization – the organization has thrived.

"The Air National Guard has changed dra-

See COMMAND on 5.

Bailey steps into newly created job

By Senior Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino
Staff Writer

Brig. Gen. Robert Bailey was 2-years-old in 1951 when his father, the late Fred Bailey, Jr., was activated for the Korean Conflict and moved the family to Maine.

The Nebraska Air National Guard was only 5-years-old.

Col. Fred Bailey, who retired in 1976, was one of the first members of the Nebraska Air National Guard as well as one of its first squadron and unit commanders.

Many changes over the years is reflected in part by unit strength. The unit was formed with 51 members and now, almost 58 years later, are still growing, with more than 900 members.

Brig. Gen. Robert Bailey carries a legacy of service. In January, he relinquished his

See BAILEY on 5.

'Notorious nine' cling together through tough mission

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The past year has been extremely challenging for the more than 1,300 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers who have faced extended deployments supporting everything from air base security missions in Nebraska

to peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and combat operations in the Persian Gulf.

For nine Nebraska Army National Guardsmen from Lexington, this year has even been even more difficult due to the fact that they've done it alone.

The Soldiers, all members of Detachment 1, Company B, 735th Maintenance Battalion,

have spent the past 10 months deployed to the Middle East as members of a Tennessee Army Guard truck company in a mission they've had to learn 'on the fly.'

According to Sgt. 1st Class Norman S. Schoeneman, platoon sergeant, the Soldiers — who have nicknamed themselves the 'Notorious Nine' —

were notified last March that they were being called to active duty to support a Tennessee Army National Guard truck company that was short of qualified truck drivers.

Schoeneman, a Holdrege Elementary School media specialist, said he received notification on March 23. He added

See NOTORIOUS NINE on 6.

Defense Department to transform Reserve, Guard by rebalancing current missions

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – A "window of opportunity to transform and change our Guard and Reserve forever" exists this year and next, and the Defense Department has several initiatives under way to rebalance Guard and Reserve forces, the department's top reserve affairs official said here Jan. 28.

Thomas F. Hall, assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, told the Reserve Officers Association mid-winter conference that Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is interested in transforming the Guard and Reserve "not tomorrow, but today," and that the fiscal 2005 defense budget will have significant rebalancing initiatives.

See MISSIONS on 2.

Separated by war, Nebraska Guard couple celebrates Valentine's Day close at heart



Photo courtesy of Capt. Martin Neal

Long Way From Home: Marna and Martin Neal pose for a photo in Iraq during one of their rare chances to see each other.

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Valentine's Day was a little different for one Nebraska couple this year.

Instead of spending the holiday together like most couple's, Martin and Marna Neal marked the day separated by several hundred miles of highway.

Not so unique? Consider the fact that those several hundred miles of road go right through the deadly "Sunni Triangle" of north-central Iraq and one begins to truly understand how unique the situation is for these two Nebraska National Guardsmen.

Capt. Martin Neal, a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 41st

See NEALS on 11.

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NEWS DIGEST

■ President praises military for taking on the 'hardest duty'

WASHINGTON, (AFPS) – President Bush praised service members around the world for their sacrifices to defend America during his State of the Union address, Jan. 20.

He said that the men and women of the American armed forces "have taken the hardest duty" in the war on terror. He added that hundreds of thousands of U.S. service members are based around the world protecting America.

"We've seen their skill and their courage in armored charges, and midnight raids and lonely hours on faithful watch," Bush said at the U.S. Capitol. "We have seen the joy when they return and felt the sorrow when one is lost."

The president said he had a special message for the many Soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines listening to the speech. "I want you and your families to know America is proud of you," he pointed out. "And my administration and this Congress will give you the resources you need to fight and win the war on terror."

Senators, House members, Cabinet secretaries – everyone in the House of Representatives chamber rose and gave a sustained standing ovation in response.

Bush said that America is a nation with a mission that comes from Americans' most basic beliefs. "We have no desire to dominate, no ambitions of empire," he said. "Our aim is a democratic peace – a peace founded upon the dignity and rights of every man and woman. America acts in this cause with friends and allies at our side, yet we understand our special calling: This great republic will lead the cause of freedom."

■ Thousands of Iraqis rally to renounce violence, Baath Party

MOSUL, Iraq, (AFPS) — More than 2,000 former members of the Baath Party turned out Jan. 26 at the Mosul Public Safety Academy to renounce their membership in the party, to denounce violence and to pledge support to a new, free and democratic Iraq.

The ceremony is the largest held in the Nineveh province to date, officials said. The Baath Party is the party of deposed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Former officers in Saddam's Iraqi army who also were Baath Party mem-

bers filed into the academy and signed an agreement that disavowed their party affiliation and pledged to cooperate fully with the Coalition Provisional Authority in serving the people of Iraq.

Army Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commanding general, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), spoke to the former Soldiers and praised them for stepping forward to forge a united Iraq.

Retired Brig. Gen. Safawi Mumtaz of the former Iraqi army, one of the event's organizers, said those in attendance want to reject violence and terrorism and work toward the future of Iraq.

"We hope that this will be a good reflection to other Baathists to participate in the process," said Mumtaz.

Mumtaz said the only difficulty in organizing the event was in finding a facility big enough for their projected attendance.

Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division worked to gain the trust of retired officers who reside in and around Mosul to show their willingness to form a new Iraq that provides opportunities to everyone, according to 1st Lt. Strauss Scantlin, 431st Civil Affairs Battalion.

The 101st facilitated the events to support reconciliation by former regime elements to ensure the democratic process includes all Iraqis who are willing to support a free, safe and democratic environment, officials said.

The ceremony is the first of two to be held in Mosul. Noncommissioned officers who served in the former Iraqi army were scheduled to come to the academy today to renounce their membership and show their support for a new Iraq.

■ Anthrax shots resumed

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — A federal judge ruled Jan. 7 that the Defense Department could again legally administer anthrax immunizations to servicemembers.

Military commanders "should immediately resume the anthrax vaccination program," wrote Dr. David S.C. Chu, DOD personnel chief, in a department-wide memorandum.

The department's anthrax vaccine immunization program had been suspended since Dec. 23, after an injunction granted the previous day by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia caused DOD to suspend the program.

The department "remains convinced that the AVIP complies with all legal

Hold Still Doc



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

A Little Blood Could Save A Life: Senior Airman Eric Cruz, 155th Medical Squadron, pulls blood from the arm of Dr. (Maj.) John Majerus Jan. 10 during the Nebraska Air National Guard's bone marrow drive. According to Air Guard officials, a total of 107 Guardsmen participated in the two-day drive. Blood drawn is cataloged put into a national registry program designed to match potential bone marrow donors with people in need. The drive was part of the Department of Defense's National Bone Marrow Registry program.

requirements, and there is now no judicial restraint" on administration of the vaccine, Dr. Chu wrote.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers maintain the anthrax vaccine is a safe and necessary prophylactic for U.S. servicemembers deployed in the war against terrorism where enemies may employ biological, chemical or nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

■ Defense Department looking to award employers for support

WASHINGTON, Jan. 30, 2004 — The Defense Department began accepting nominations Feb. 1 for the 2004 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award, which recognizes significant contributions and sacrifices made by employers of National Guard and Reserve members.

For the first time since the awards program was established in 1996, nominations may be submitted by anyone who has knowledge of a company or organization deserving of the award. Previously, only National Guardsmen and Reservists could submit nominations.

In addition, Defense officials expect to increase the number of awards pre-

sented – previously five – to as many as 15.

Bob Hollingsworth, executive director of the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, said the awards program is particularly important now, because so many of America's employers are affected by the war on terror.

As of Jan. 27, 193,804 Guardsmen and Reservists were serving on active duty: 164,416 in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve, 2,000 in the Naval Reserve, 19,757 in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 6,764 in the Marine Corps Reserve and 1,057 in the Coast Guard Reserve.

"An essential link has been formed, as many of America's employers have become inextricably linked to the nation's defense by sharing their most precious asset, their employees," Hollingsworth said.

Nominations will be accepted at the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Web site through March 15. Recipients will be recognized during Sept. 21 ceremonies in Washington.

Previous award recipients include Home Depot, Miller Brewing, American Airlines, American Express, Intel and UPS.

MISSIONS continued from page 1.

Hall said the department is studying ways to improve Guard and Reserve end strength, reduce multiple mobilizations of the same units and relieve stress on the force.

Hall, a retired Navy rear admiral, said DoD is moving toward increasing the base number of Guard and Reserve troops and is moving some of its missions and functions to active duty forces.

The department has looked at about 300,000 military manpower positions for possible outsourcing to contractors.

Hall said he wanted to separate "fact from fiction" amid reports that Guard and Reserve units were being overused through multiple mobilizations, saying that some reports could not be further from the truth.

Hall said that since Sept. 11, 2001, about 352,000 Guardsmen and Reservists have been mobilized. That number, he said, represents only 38 percent of the drilling reserves, not including Indi-

vidual Ready Reserve members, while some media reports create the impression that "we've used them all up."

"We've got 62 percent of the Guard and Reserve that we haven't touched," he said.

Hall said Guard and Reserve members in that 62 percent who haven't been mobilized in the past 10 years have led his department to examine its mobilization patterns and policies.

He said a review of mobilizations by Guard and Reserve troops over the past six years revealed that only 4 percent of the force has been affected by "multi-mobilizations."

But, he added, the department is aware that's small consolation for those reserve component members who have been deploying.

"In that 4 percent, if you are one of that group that has been mobilized, two, three and four times, it's a problem," Hall said. "So we have looked at the stress on the force. We have defined it, and the mes-

sage here is that it's a small group, but it's an important group."

Hall noted that those Guard and Reserve members called most for mobilization belong to units that specialize in mortuary, civil affairs, force protection and air traffic control. In those groups, he said, there is a need to "rebalance so that we do not mobilize those people over and over again. And we're committed to that, and that's going to be part of the rebalancing."

Hall said DoD also is looking into providing more predictability for Guard and Reserve members prior to deployment. He said Guard and Reserve members "need to know up front" when they're going to mobilize and for how long.

"We need to get to a predictability, a rotational base for both our active and reserve forces that provides that," he said. "Whether it's one (deployment) in six years, or one in five, that's extremely important."

Prairie Soldier

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The **Prairie Soldier** is the newspaper of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, authorized and published by the State Public Affairs Office, Military Department of Nebraska, in accordance with AR 360-1 and AFR 190-1. It is Army-funded and published bi-monthly by contracted photo-offset process. Circulation is about 8,000.

Deadline for all submissions is the first Wednesday of the month: February, April, June, August, October, and December.

Letters, articles, notices of events, photographs and art are welcome, but may be edited for clarity or brevity. Publication of any submission is at the discretion of the editor. Submissions can also be emailed at kevin.hynes@ne.ngb.army.mil. All photos must be high resolution and include complete caption information.

The views and opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the Military Department of Nebraska or the U.S. Department of Defense.

The **Prairie Soldier** can be read on-line at www.neguard.com

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Shotgun: Pfc. Nickie Nichols, 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance), rides shotgun in a guntruck and scans the convoy route for possible ambush sites during live fire exercises at Fort Riley, Kan.



Truckers use live bullets to prepare for deployment to Iraq

By Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Dave Nore
Staff Writer

Crawl, walk, run. Sounds simple, but it may be the most important training strategy for over 300 Nebraska Soldiers learning to protect themselves and successfully complete their mission in Iraq. Recently, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance), completed nine days of force protection training that culminated with a live fire exercise conducted during convoy operations at Fort Riley, Kan. The 267th Ord. Co. was mobilized in November for Operation Iraqi Freedom. They departed for Iraq in early February.

The concept of learning in the stages of crawl, walk and run is not new, but it has proved to be extremely effective for the leaders and the Soldiers of this recently mobilized unit, which trained at Fort Riley, Kan., for approximately two months.

Force protection is taught in three phases — called gates — of training.

Gate one is urban operations, which includes urban warfare, movement techniques and convoy operations. Classroom instruction during the crawl phase is followed by practical exercises that allow Soldiers to practice the skills they learned in the classroom.

According to Maj. Rick Aper, officer-in-charge of the force protection instruction at Fort Riley, gate two is the walk stage. Here, Soldiers incorporate everything they were taught in the classroom. This includes actually setting up a mission in which leaders must evaluate potential opposition forces, conduct vehicle searches, perform checkpoint operations, convoy operations and individual security.

Aper said during this gate, Soldiers are also required to jump out of their vehicles, set up security — with and without vehicles — and successfully re-

pel any potential danger. He added that in order to give realism to the training, the evaluators involved a variety of different scenarios, all of which were designed to test the Soldiers' ability to quickly react and make correct decisions in a highly intense situation.

The training is extremely important, said 1st Lt. Leslie Durr, 267th Ord. Co. platoon leader.

"Our Soldiers are motivated and it means a lot to them to keep the training realistic," she said. "Where we are going, it is most important to learn these skills"

The culmination of the training occurred during gate three — days 8 and 9 of the exercise. During this portion of the training, the Soldiers were required to put everything that they'd been taught into perspective.

On the first day of gate three, Soldiers conducted a dry run through a live fire range, practicing their actions without actually using live ammunition. The next day, however, was for real. During this particular exercise, Soldiers and unit leaders got into their vehicles and actually engaged enemies in simulated ambushes.

Nebraska Soldiers were given high praise by 75th Division training personnel, who evaluated the exercise.

"They're motivated and I'll tell you they have some take charge Soldiers (and) some take charge leaders," said Aper.

Throughout the training, unit leaders controlled the convoy through by radio, just as they would be in a real situation.

"We control the movement of the convoy, just as if we were rolling down the road in Iraq," said Capt. Glenn Wattier, 267th Ord. Co. platoon leader. "This adds realism to the training and also gives our Soldiers the sense of how important this training is. We are our own force protection; if we fail, there may not be anyone else to protect us".

As the convoy rolled down the road it was "hit" at four ambush sites. At three ambush sites Soldiers in the vehicles



Valuable Leadership Training: 1st Lt. Leslie Durr directs 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance) Soldiers during a simulated ambush during convoy operations training. Reacting to disabled vehicles and stranded drivers is a major force protection issue.



Through The Dust: 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance Company), "guntrucks" move out onto the live fire convoy route as Soldiers prepare to react to an ambush during Day 9 of force protection training at Fort Riley, Kan.. The mobilization training exercise was designed to prepare members of the Lincoln-based Nebraska Army National Guard company for potential dangers they might face in Iraq.



Photos by David Nore

Hot Lead: Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers in the lead vehicle return sustained fire with a crew served .50 caliber machine gun during a simulated ambush along the live fire convoy route.

returned fire with an M-2, .50 caliber machine gun, M-249 Squad Automatic Weapons and M-16 rifles as they pushed through the ambush. At the final station, the Soldiers in the convoy set up dismounted perimeter defense and fired at known "enemy targets".

The training was beneficial to both the Soldiers and the leaders, said Wattier.

"Our job is to complete the mission and bring the Soldiers home safely. We are a maintenance unit, but this is important training revolving around troop leading procedures, communication, and reaction," he said.

"This is excellent training, some of the best since I received my commission."

Communications Lifeline: Chief Warrant Officer Doug Benes relays command and control information to his dismounted Soldiers as they react to a simulated convoy ambushes by laying down suppressive fire directed toward enemy locations. Soldiers learned that in the heat of battle, clear communications is key.



Looking Forward

■ New air refueling wing commander says unit's strength lies in members, history of excellence

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Duty in the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing has changed dramatically over the past five years since then Col. Robert Bailey took command of the unit in August 1998.

During the course of that time, the unit has gone through two major aircraft modifications, deployed and participated in its first war, saw its security forces squadron deploy to the air base in the moments following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks flew its first combat air patrol over the Continental United States, deployed to Spain in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and has seen numerous members of the unit mobilize for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Guardsmen can expect even more challenges and changes over the next five years. That's the news from Col. Steven L. Adams, new commander of the 155th ARW. In mid-January, Adams sat down with the *Prairie Soldier* to discuss a variety of issues facing the Nebraska Air National Guard. The following is a text of that interview:

Prairie Soldier: *Why did you decide that this was the job that you wanted at this time?*

Adams: "It's kind of a culmination of things. Your career takes certain directions and certain things that you do during your career moves you in a direction. Maybe consciously and subconsciously, I had prepared myself for this position. I had watched and worked for all of the commanders that had been here before, and I felt that I wanted to continue to provide the opportunity for the unit to continue into the future to do what they did."

I guess it was just the time in my career where I felt that I was ready for the job, that I had consciously and subconsciously prepared myself for. I guess all the stars aligned at this time and I felt that this was the best time for me to assume this job."

Prairie Soldier: *What are your goals during your tenure?*

Adams: "I have many goals for my tenure. You have to keep in mind that I have the luxury of taking command of a thoroughly outstanding organization, so my goals are, number one, to keep it that way. But I can't do that. That's something that happens because of the people we have working for t h e

organization. We're very fortunate to have such outstanding people working here.

One of my goals is to give the people we have working here the support they need to continue the outstanding work that they have done for the organization for many, many years.

I also want to make sure that we're doing everything that we can to get the next generation ready to assume command of this organization. I really believe that as you look down the road into the future as much as you can, the Air National Guard as a whole is going to change quite a bit. It's going to affect all of us to some degree. And our future leaders are going to have to deal with those unique challenges.

So we need to make sure that we have prepared those people the way that people before me helped me prepare for this job so the people are ready to take on command.

And I also want people to – not that there isn't already – appreciate what everyone does in the organization because we're all here to make the Nebraska Air National Guard the premier Air National Guard organization that it is. And that doesn't happen because one organization is doing an outstanding job independently. It happens because everybody is working toward that common goal.

We need to build on that and build more of a sense of community and family here."

Prairie Soldier: *When Colonel Bailey took command in 1998, the Guard was a different place than it is now. Considering all that has happened during that time, where do you think we'll be five years from now?*

Adams: "I think if you look back 12 years or ten years, you'll have to say that the Nebraska Air National Guard has changed. It really changed when we got the KC-135 and then in the last five years or more – specifically since 9-11 – we've gone through a complete metamorphosis.

I believe that in the next five years, our challenge is going to be that we're going to see a continuing reliance on the reserve components. The Total Force idea is going to be strong, so all of our personnel are going to be asked to continue to support their active duty counterparts somewhere in the world. And with that will come the challenges of employers, families and that sort of thing.

I think also, the Air National Guard is going to change in that airframe availability is going to be reduced and money is always going to be tight. We're always going to be involved in this process of how do we best utilize the reserve forces?

So I think in the next five years, we're going to be involved in t h a t p r o - c e s s

The Adams File

◆ Graduated from Fullerton High School in 1971.

◆ Joined U.S. Air Force in 1972 as enlisted airman.

◆ Joined Nebraska Air National Guard in 1977 and received commission as a second lieutenant after graduating from the Academy of Military Science later that year.

◆ Attended flight school in 1981.

◆ Served as commander of the 155th Weapons Security Flight

◆ Served two tours at the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C.

◆ Rejoined the Nebraska Air Guard during unit conversion to KC-135R Stratotanker in 1993.

◆ Served as commander of the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron (2000-02) and the 155th Operations Group (2002-04.)

lenged to figure out how we stay ahead of that process so that we have some influence on our future. We're going to be balancing here at the unit in how proactive do we want to be or must we be for our future so that we have some positive impact on the direction that at least our unit needs to go in the future.

Another challenge that I think we have is that we have a great number of individuals who are retiring right now who are taking with them a wealth of experience. We're really going to have to work with our personnel – personnel who are very dedicated to the organization that want to do and do a great job – to continue our training and mentorship program to ensure that they're ready for the future as well."

Prairie Soldier: *What do you think is the biggest strength of the 155th Air Refueling Wing?*

Adams: "That's easy...the people."

We're just so fortunate to have such outstanding people here....people who want to do a great job.

You don't win all of the outstanding unit awards without having people like we have. For example, right now we're going through a very difficult time with airplanes breaking, limited airframes being available because of the (Global Air Traffic Management system) conversion. The people responsible for taking care of these airplanes are really working hard to get those airplanes up to the standard that we've come to expect here.

I just can't say enough about people like that – and they're systemic to the base. You never worry about the job that these people are doing. They are doing outstanding work. I never worry about whether or not we're doing the job right and whether we're doing the job safely, because I know the strength of this organization is its people. Those people are going to do the job. I have total confidence in them."

Prairie Soldier: *We've talked a lot about strengths and your goals. What are some of the areas that you would like to see continued strengthening and improvement?*

Adams: "I think we need to continue – and it's an ongoing process – having some way to get the information out to the rest of the organization about what people are doing. It's amazing what people are doing in their own individual shops around here. And they just do it. They're not expecting rewards. They're not expecting accolades.

I think if people knew what the other organizations and what other individuals are doing around this base, they'd be amazed about it.

I want to start working on building this understanding through my deputy commanders (and) the squadron commanders by talking to their folks to develop an appreciation and understanding about what goes on on this base – how we're like a small community. How we all are working together to-

ward this common goal.

I don't want it to appear that I don't think there's that appreciation now. I think there is. But I think that sometimes we get so busy with what's going on around us with real world deployments that sometimes we lose sight of the fact that we're all supporting the common goal. We get kind of caught up in our own little area and we don't venture out to gain appreciation for other people.

I guess I'd like to continue to build the community atmosphere...more of a cooperative atmosphere...where people really do understand what other people are doing to support them in our efforts here."

Prairie Soldier: *How has this idea of the Citizen Airman, Citizen Soldier changed over the last couple of years? How big of a challenge is it going to be to help people continue to balance the different poles that are pulling them apart, more specifically, jobs and families?*

Adams: "I think 9-11 drove home the fact that few of us if any of us truly understood just what a commitment we were making to our country. The idea of the Total Force Concept...we always had some vision in mind of deploying as a whole unit for a period of time and then coming home. I don't know that we ever envisioned that we would be tasked almost continually at such a level where our people would be dispersed to so many locations at one time.

We're struggling right now trying to explain to the young airmen who are coming into the unit what it means to be a member of the National Guard. But we owe it to those people to be able to articulate what we expect of them.

I believe that this will level out over time. We're going to have to better explain that. But right now, we're going to have to juggle and do whatever we can as a unit to help these folks juggle family, job, Guard.

As you know, those priorities have been shifting over the years. They shift back and forth. We've asked a lot from our folks. I suspect we're going to continue to ask a lot from our people.

Knowing these people as I do, they're going to want to do everything they can to support our mission as our unit. So we have to watch out for them so that we can help them in any way that we can to balance their needs, to work with their employers, to take care of their families and to meet their requirements as a unit member.

I know that we're going to be asking a lot from them in the future. I just don't know that I can tell them how much. We've had a bit of a lull here now from what we've seen over the last two or three years. But we know that's just a temporary thing.

The thing that I can do is make sure that we have in place those mechanisms to help our people keep their combat readiness at the level it needs to be and that we have mechanisms available to help their families in any way possible. And then we need a strong ESGR program so that we can work cooperatively with their employers to help these folks as well.

We need to do something in all three areas to make sure that we're taking care of our folks.



BAILEY continued from page 1.

command of the 155th Air Refueling Wing. He also was promoted to brigadier general and assumed the part-time role of chief of staff, Headquarters, Nebraska Air National Guard of Lincoln.

He began serving full-time as state deputy commander for Nebraska's Joint Forces Headquarters, a new organization comprised of Headquarters, Nebraska Air National Guard, and State Area Command.

His father's influence on his career is obvious.

"I kind of grew up coming out to the base," said Bailey. "I remember standing in my dad's office looking out at the planes with the binoculars.

Bailey joined the Nebraska Air National Guard in 1967, first serving as a jet engine mechanic. In 1973, he graduated from pilot training and began a career of flying the RF-4C Phantom II, then in 1994, the KC-135R Stratotanker, the unit's current aircraft.

He has accumulated more than 4,800 flying hours. In 1971, he earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1982 and is a graduate from Air Command and Staff College and the Air War College.

His assignments have included chief of weapons and tactics, chief of standardization and evaluation, operations officer, squadron commander, operations group commander, vice-commander, then finally the 155th commander since

1998.

While packing up his office to assume his new roles, Bailey found three things left by his predecessors that he said needed to stay: binoculars, a shoe shine kit and an Air Guard history book.

"The binoculars, which were there since my father was commander, are symbolic because they give a sense of being the overseer...you need to see problems coming and look into the future and be ready. The shoe shine kit...reflects professionalism—more than spit and polish and looking good. We need to be professional in our actions and make sure we're helping our people to prepare and educate themselves.

"And the history book. I thought the book was mine, but I took a look and it said 'Lois Luebke, Do Not Remove.' I thought that was a good comment. We can never forget those who served before us. We must remember people make this organization great."

As Bailey looks to the future, he reflects on the past as well.

"It's the people of this unit who make it easy for me to say this is one of the finest Air National Guard units in America," Bailey said. "If I look over the five years, it's been an opportunity to serve in one of the most demanding periods we've experienced as an organization since the unit's activation during the Korean War."

He said when the unit flew combat hours during the Kosovo Conflict, it was the first time



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Shiny New Stars: Robert Bailey receives his new rank as a brigadier general from his wife Marjorie (left) and his mother, Norma Bailey. General Bailey stepped down as commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing in January.

since the Korean War the 155th had flown combat hours. Since then, members have participated in Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, deploying people 2,000 times all over the world, said Bailey. He credited members for accident-free deployments.

The accelerated demands and tempo following the Kosovo Conflict have been like no other in the unit's history, Bailey said.

One of the most challenging times of his command was leading the aerial refueling effort at Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, during the Kosovo conflict, where 30 aerial refueling aircraft and 800 active, Guard and reserve members were based.

"It was an introduction of more challenges to come...more chal-

lenges and demands on our people," Bailey said. "We flew around the clock. It was very exhausting. You could see it in the people."

The low and high point of his post was the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. "The low was hours after 9/11. The high was when 60 security specialists showed up at the base without a single phone call, and we also had aircraft ready to go and orbiting over Denver five hours after the initial attack. Our people just came together and did it," said the general.

As a leader, Bailey said his philosophy has been one of empowerment.

"It's your people that produce the results. My job was to deflect credit. The people are out there doing their jobs and making sac-

rifices. My job has been to become an enabler so they can do their jobs...and to give them the freedom to do their jobs. I'm pleased we've spent a lot of time in leadership seminars and preparing future leaders and participating in open discussions.

During his change-of-command speech, he recounted a story about his last flight on Christmas Eve 2003. He and his flight crew were flying an Operation Noble Eagle mission in orbit over the District of Columbia.

At 23,000 feet, he looked down and saw a pinpoint of light shine in Arlington National Cemetery where he knew stood a soldier, standing watch at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The crew was standing watch overhead as well.

"It was reminder of what the National Guard does everyday for our nation. Likewise, each of you before me today are standing watch in some way. Standing watch over the ideals and values we cherish... standing watch over the citizens of this great nation...standing watch over our families.

"We stood many a watch together. The amazing thing is that you all stand watch everyday. Yet, you never look at it as a routine watch, risk-free, or without cost. Rather it is viewed as a solemn duty and even a privilege. Each of you before me today contributes to our collective ability to stand watch over America, and each of you has contributed to the many successes we enjoyed over the years."

COMMAND continued from page 11.

matically over the past decade and many more changes are in store as we approach almost the middle of the first decade of the 21st Century," Lempke told the assembled crowd of approximately 800.

Lempke said the Nebraska Air Guard has lived up to each of Air Guard director Lt. Gen. Daniel James III's goals of being ready, reliable and relevant.

"I'm pleased to report to you today that under the leadership of Brig. Gen. Robert Bailey, the 155th is already there," he said. "You've proven yourself ready."

During Bailey's tenure, which began in August 1998, the unit saw its first combat deployment and flew its first combat missions since the Korean War as part of Operation Allied Force, the bombing campaign of Kosovo and Serbia. The unit also responded immediately following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks by securing the Lincoln air base against any potential terrorist attacks. A few hours later the unit was flying refueling missions in support of fighters flying combat air patrols over a major American city.

Air Guardsmen from the 155th ARW have also supported operations overseas as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom while the unit continues to upgrade its aircraft with the most modern navigation and communication equipment in the Air Force.

"With this upgrade, the 155th will own the most modern tanker jets available to the Air National Guard," said Lempke.

Lempke said another of Bailey's many accomplishments was raising the overall unit's

strength from 97 percent to its current level of 104 percent. He added that Adams has big shoes to fill.

"We hope you break every single one of his records," said Lempke. "In fact, we expect you to."

Bailey said the change of command ceremony was bitter-sweet.

"I must be honest with you, I wasn't sure that I was ready for today to come," said Bailey, new Nebraska Air National Guard chief of staff and the first commander of the newly formed Joint Forces Headquarters - Nebraska.

"It is with mixed feelings that I relinquish command of arguably the best Air National Guard unit in the country," he said. "A bold claim, yet one easily made because of the dedicated and professional airmen and women standing before me today. A claim I make not because of this moment in history, but a claim made because it is our history to be great."

Bailey was the second Bailey to command the unit - his father, the late-Col. Fred Bailey, served as commander from 1948-1976. He said the entire unit contributed to the organization's success. He recalled a late night flight on Christmas Eve to make his point.

"Because of you, I didn't get home Christmas Eve until 0300 Christmas morning," said Bailey about a late-night Noble



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

Passing the Colors: Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke (left) passes the 155th Air Refueling Wing flag to Col. Steve Adams during the change of command ceremony held Jan. 10 in Lincoln. Watching the ceremony is Senior Master Sgt. Lang Anderson (left center) and out-going commander, Brig. Gen. Robert Bailey (far right).

Eagle flight that took him over the skies of Washington, D.C. "This might sound like a complaint. It is not. It was a privilege to serve that night and you, the members, made it happen."

"It required skills from dozens of sections on base and countless people," he said.

During the long flight, Bailey said that he and the other members of the crew had an opportunity take in the various sights of Washington, D.C., from 23,000 feet as they flew in support of a F-15 combat air patrol protecting the nation's capital from any potential attack.

"We could easily pick out the well-known monuments to Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, and of course, the Capitol and the White House," said Bailey. It was the darkened space of Arlington Cemetery that most drew Bailey's attention, though.

a sobering responsibility and a reminder of what the National Guard does everyday for our nation."

According to Bailey, the unit was severely tested during the past five years. Throughout it all, the members of the 155th ARW continuously shone.

"That night I ended 30 years of aviation service," he said. "Today I end my serving as the overseer of this great organization."

"We stood many a watch together. The amazing thing is that you all stand watch everyday. Yet, you never look at it as a routine watch, risk-free or without cost," Bailey said. "Rather, it is viewed as a solemn duty and even a privilege."

"Each of you before me today contributes to our collective ability to stand watch over America and each of you has contributed to the many successes we enjoyed over the years,"

he added. "It has been my pleasure to stand watch with you."

Adams, too, professed his admiration for the members of the 155th ARW. He added that there will be even more challenges in the immediate future that will require continued efforts by every single member of the Nebraska Air National Guard.

"To build upon our reputation as the unit of choice, we must ensure our aircraft and personnel are ready to serve whenever called," Adams said. "To do this, we must maintain the highest level of personal readiness possible."

"The 155th will provide the means and equipment to ensure we have what we need to accomplish our mission," he added. "Each member must ensure they are doing everything they can to maintain the highest level of readiness. One can ill afford the scrutiny that will come if a deployment is delayed because we were not ready to go."

Adams said he expects the members of the unit to continue to serve in the way they have always done.

"We have built the reputation that we are the unit to call when there is a job to be done right the first time," he said. "Your commitment to excellence sets you apart from your peers and I am proud to have this opportunity to serve as your commander."

"As we look to the future, I know I can count on your selfless service, professionalism and commitment to excellence to improve upon our reputation," added Adams. "Let us now go forward and continue to set the stand for others to follow."

Guard retention concerns officials, but exodus not expected

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – Though the Army National Guard and Army Reserve specifically and the reserve components in general have been meeting their recruiting and retention goals, DoD officials still are concerned and are looking for ways to address retention.

But DoD officials do not expect an exodus of Guard Soldiers after they return from duty in Afghanistan and Iraq, contrary to news reports today.

Those reports cite a National Guard Bureau survey of 5,000 volunteers from 15 states that said the number of Guard Soldiers who choose to leave the military could jump to 20 to 22 percent a year among those who have served long overseas tours. At the end of 2003, the figure was roughly 16 percent.

"First, this is a 'voluntary' survey,"

said Pentagon spokesman Army Lt. Col. Dan Stoneking. "If you have a survey at a dining facility about the food, who is going to fill it out?" But Stoneking said the National Guard deserves some credit for conducting the survey and anticipating problems.

"This gives them time to put together a program for recruiting and retention," he said.

National Guard officials said people should not overreact to the survey. It is just one tool they use to measure retention intentions and it should not be viewed out of context, they said.

Guard officials pointed out that history indicates many Soldiers who now say they intend to leave the service ultimately will re-enlist once they get home and spend time with their fami-

lies.

During a recent trip to Asia, Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers commented on recruiting and retention efforts during an interview with the military's Stars and Stripes newspaper.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said American service men and women are stepping forward to re-enlist, "as I would expect. We are a nation at war. This is the time for our military to rise to the occasion and serve the nation at a time like no other."

Myers said active duty and reserve component personnel are stepping forward to serve. What's more, he said, young Americans are enlisting to help fight the war on terror.

"This is the time to raise your right

hand and swear 'to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic,'" he said. "There has never been a more dire threat to our security – and not just to the United States, but to our friends and allies."

As of Jan. 21, 194,234 reserve component personnel were on active duty, DoD statistics show.

The vast majority – 165,068 – are National Guardsmen and Army Reservists. The Naval Reserve has 1,918 people on active duty, the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 19,383; and the Marine Corps Reserve, 6,790. The Coast Guard has activated 1,057 reservists. The numbers include members assigned to units and individual augmentees.

NOTORIOUS NINE continued from page 1.

that neither he nor the other eight Nebraska Soldiers knew much about what they were getting into. Instead, they prepared themselves for everything.

"We knew it was a year with a Tennessee Army Guard unit," said Sgt. Blaine Buckley, a truck driver who normally would be working as a customer relation supervisor for TruGreen – ChemLawn in Lincoln.

The Soldiers – Schoeneman, Buckley, Staff Sgt. Michael E. Maguire, Sgt. William H. Carlson Jr., Sgt. Howard Roth, Staff Sgt. David Zlatkovsky, Sgt. Jeffery A. Holbrook, Staff Sgt. Ryan Johnson and Sgt. Jason Redding – arrived at Fort Knox, Ky., on April 9. They departed for Kuwait on April 18.

During the course of that one week of mobilization training – probably the shortest pre-mobilization training any Nebraska Army Guard unit received last year – the Soldiers had to both quickly blend themselves into the 1175th Truck Company and learn how to operate their new unit's Heavy Equipment Transport System vehicles.

The HETS is essentially a massive, multi-wheeled flatbed tractor-trailer designed by the Army to transport huge 70-ton payloads, primarily the M-1 Abrams tank, over highways, unimproved roads or cross-country terrain. It's the biggest of the Army's big rigs.

After setting down in Kuwait, the unit went to work almost immediately moving vehicles, equipment and supplies between Iraq and Kuwait. The Soldiers say the mission has been both stressful and mundane.

"This mission is difficult because we (had) no armored plates for our flak jackets. We had to develop our own gun-trucks. Our unit has driven 1.5 million miles," said Schoeneman in answering an e-mail interview request that took over a month to arrive back in Nebraska via traditional mail.

"We are constantly on the road," he added.

Schoeneman said the unit is typically tasked with approximately three transportation missions a week, each lasting several days. By and large, each Soldier goes into Iraq approximately three to five times a month.

The missions into Iraq are always tense, he added.

"We travel in convoys with guntrucks," he said. "We are

always on the alert for IEDs (improvised explosive devices), RPGs (rocket propelled grenades) and Iraqis with weapons."

Zlatkovsky said another challenge is simply driving on all types of roads in all types of weather.

"The weather and the job of hauling everything... and I mean everything... from water buffaloes to tanks has been grueling," said Zlatkovsky, a Dawson County Department of Roads bridge foreman/operator in civilian life.

"You call, we haul," said Holbrook, platoon security sergeant who this time last year was working as a tire manager for Graham Tire Company in Kearney.

Holbrook said that over the past year, the unit has transported everything from tanks and Hum-Vees to 10K generators.

They've also been involved in pulling the 3rd Infantry Division out of Iraq and transporting the 4th Infantry Division and its equipment into the country.

"It's been learn as you go. Trial and error," Holbrook said.

The Soldiers have also had to deal with the difficulty of navigating their trucks through sometime hostile territory in Iraq.

"It's a culture shock up north," said Holbrook. "There's a stretch of road 90 miles long that's dirt. We give families along that road food and water."

"It's part of our food for peace program," he added.

Holbrook said that he's gained a better appreciation for the work that veterans of past wars did as a result of his deployment. "Prior to this tour, I've talked with many World War II, Korea and Vietnam vets. People don't know what they're capable of until they're in that situation."

"Now I know," he added. "It all comes back to the training



Photos courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class Norman Schoeneman

Ready To Move Out: A Hum-Vee crew prepares to depart for Camp Navistar where they spent two weeks conducting recovery missions. Pictured are (from left) Sgt. Howard Roth, Sgt. Jason Redding, Sgt. B.J. Carlson and Sgt. Blaine Buckley.



Tip Of The Spear: Nebraska Army National Guard soldiers pause while working at the Camp Spearhead port. Pictured are: (sitting, left to right) Staff Sgt. Jeffery Holbrook, Sgt. Blaine Buckley and Sgt. 1st Class Norman Schoeneman. (Standing, left to right) Staff Sgt. Michael Maguire, Staff Sgt. Ryan Johnson and Staff Sgt. David Zlatkovsky.

I've received."

When not on the road, the Soldiers are stationed in Kuwait at a place in the desert named "Camp Arlington." They live in tents, pull occasional Guard duty and generally try to make do with what they've got on hand.

The Soldiers say they realize they've got it pretty good considering the conditions that many American troops are serving in 'Up North.'

"We have it better than some do," said Schoeneman. "We have a good dining facility, showers, tents with air conditioning and that now have heating elements."

"We've made the tents we live in pretty homey," added Zlatkovsky. "We have a lot better conditions than most we've seen in our troubles."

The Soldiers are able to keep up with their families and news from home through a variety of sources. Some Soldiers receive newspapers from home. Others

search the internet for local tidbits. Television is also an almost constant companion.

The internet and phones are also important, however, the unit has only one computer and two DSN phone lines for the more than 200 Soldiers assigned to it.

The Guardsmen have even been able to keep up with the Nebraska Cornhusker football team through Armed Forces Television and the game tapes that have been sent to them from the University of Nebraska.

"We see the game about two weeks later," said Schoeneman. "We did watch the Texas game on TV and the Oklahoma State game. The rest, we were on the road."

Football, it would seem, is one of several things that both the Nebraska and Tennessee Guardsmen take seriously.

"There is a bit of a rivalry and competition," said Blakely.

"There has been some trash talking, but we always bring up the last two meetings between the two states," said Schoeneman.

"Everyone knows Nebraska history... enough said," added Holbrook. "We're still a dynasty."

Not surprisingly, either, is the fact that the Nebraska and Tennessee Soldiers have bonded together during their time together. The Nebraska Guardsmen say they feel they've been accepted and treated fairly by their new company mates.

"At first it was hard forming new relationships," said Holbrook. "But we are all Soldiers... and the National Guard is family."

"The Soldiers from Tennessee treated us very well from the minute we arrived," added Schoeneman. "They accepted us into their unit and were glad we were there. We've grown into a solid platoon."

Still, being away from home and deployed away from their parent unit has left the Soldiers

feeling lost and forgotten at times. In fact, all of the Soldiers interviewed expressed frustration over the fact that they had to initiate contact back to their home organization. Schoeneman said the lack of communication is understandable.

"For a time we felt lost," he said. "That has changed the last few months and is getting better."

"We know they didn't forget about us. (They) were busy with their activations and duties back home."

The soldiers also expressed an almost universal feeling about wanting to go home.

Some say they're unsure whether they'll reenlist again into the Guard when their time comes. Others say their even more committed to the Guard than they've ever been.

Most importantly, they say, they've learned about themselves as Soldiers and as people during their time away.

When asked what the biggest lesson they learned, the answers are diverse:

"I can make something out of nothing," said Carlson, who left his job at the Heartland Co-Op in Minden, Neb., and his wife Candace, to deploy overseas.

"Nebraska has the best Soldiers," said Maguire, a service technician in Lexington who left behind a wife and two sons.

"I have natural gift for leading," said Holbrook, father of two whose wife Barb has been challenged to keep the home fire burning while he's away. "I also realized how much I need my family to function. No man is an island."

"It's funny how one year of your life can impact your attitude, personality and your decision-making," added Buckley. "This deployment has made me realize who I used to be and who I wish to be."

"It's made me a stronger person and makes one realize how special your family and friends are," said Zlatkovsky, who left behind his wife Karla, two sons and a daughter. "I would just like to say thank you for all of the support and also for all the things people have sent us and the prayers."

"I have learned that I am a stronger individual than I thought I was," added Schoeneman, father of three. "I have learned to appreciate things at home that I took for granted before. I have learned that the Nebraska National Guard has good training and we were ready for most of what we have seen here."

Deploying troops wished farewell

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Staff Sgt. Robert Schwanz was faced with a difficult task. Surrounded by his four children and wife, who is expecting their fifth child, Schwanz sat in a metal chair on the main floor of the Lexington, Neb., armory quietly trying to comfort his daughter Sierra, 9, who was grasping his neck tightly as tears filled her eyes.

In front of them, a litany of governmental and military leaders stood in front of his unit to wish it luck as it mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Normally, Schwanz, a squad leader with Lexington's Detachment 1, Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion, would be spending his time working on a ranch near Gothenburg.

Instead he and more than 100 of his unit mates from Lexington, McCook and Kearney along with soldiers from the Scottsbluff, Chadron and Columbus were called up for a deployment that will eventually take them to the Middle East as part of the largest troop rotation since World War II.

Schwanz said that the mobilization was toughest on his children, who range in ages from 11 to 7.

"The oldest ones that understand it, it's hard," said Schwanz several days after the Jan. 13 evening ceremony in Lexington, one of three held that week. The other two were held in McCook and Kearney. "But they're getting by."

"And the littlest ones, they don't understand what a possible 18 months is," he said.

Co. B, 735th Trans. Bn., is the second Nebraska Army National Guard unit to be mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom this year, joining the 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance), which mobilized in December and deployed to Iraq in February.

In all, Department of Defense officials say, 105,000 military members are involved

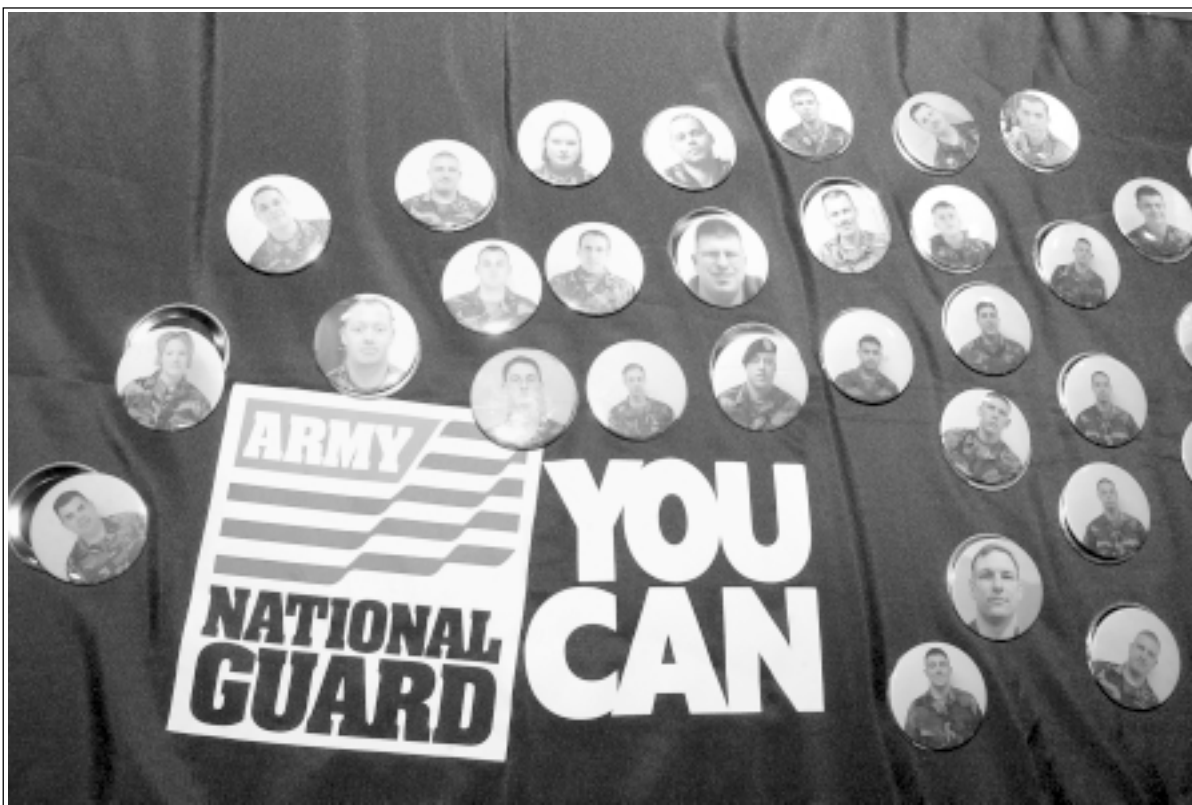


Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

A Mobilization's Many Face: Soldiers' faces cover a table at the Lexington armory before the start of the Jan. 13 mobilization ceremony for members of Detachment 1, Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion. The Soldiers, members of a unit headquartered in Kearney with detachments in Lexington and McCook, were mobilized in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and are part of the largest troop rotation since the end of World War II.

in the rotation, of which 30,000 are from the National Guard and Reserves. Of those, approximately 325 will be from the Nebraska Army National.

During the Lexington ceremony, attended by around 100 people, community and military leaders expressed their gratitude to the Soldiers.

"When I was asked to speak to you, I had a hard time thinking about what I could possibly say," said Lexington City Manager Joe Pepplitsch. "About 30 minutes ago, I came up with it."

"I'm here to tell you thank you."

Brig. Gen. Walter Zink, assistant adjutant general, Army, echoed his words adding that the soldiers are truly part of one of the most important American efforts in decades.

"Since Sept. 11th, the operation has been named Enduring Freedom. I tell people that the emphasis is really on endur-

ing," said Zink.

"Make no mistake, this is a war unlike any that we've fought in the past," he said. "Our adversaries aren't a specific political unit or a particular country, but rather a group of terrorists...a group of terrorists who would like to extinguish the right to liberty to life that we hold dear."

Zink said that the Soldiers mobilizing for duty in the Middle East are part of a long, distinguished line of American patriots who have always put their private lives on hold during times of national crises to defend the American ideal.

He added that today's Soldiers are no different than their forefathers.

"Thomas Jefferson told us that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance and part of that is the acceptance of the willingness of its citizens to take up arms to support the rights, the principles that form the foundation of our great nation," said

Zink.

The commander of the unit, Capt. Ryan Earleywine, said the unit is ready to accept that challenge.

"As we prepare to depart on this long and difficult journey, I continue to be at awe with the commitment and patriotism of our Soldiers and their families," said Earleywine, who just days earlier had been assigned to command the unit during its overseas mission. "There's no doubt in my mind that these Soldiers are ready," he said.

Earleywine also thanked the families for their continued support and the sacrifices they will be making during their Soldiers' absence, which is expected to last approximately 18 months.

He also pledged to do everything in his ability to ensure the safe return of the Guardsmen.

"This is not a responsibility I take lightly."

The unit is currently training at Fort Riley, Kan.

Guardsmen complete air base security deployment

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Nearly 70 Soldiers were honored in Omaha, Dec. 19, when they were demobilized after serving for a year in one of the most unique missions the Army Guard has ever seen.

The Soldiers, part of Operation Armored Falcon, were mobilized in January to provide security at Offutt Air Force Base and the National Guard air base in Lincoln in an effort to help the Air Force make up for increased security needs brought on by the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Approximately 60 other soldiers from O'Neill's 755th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company, and the Nebraska City-based 173rd Chemical Company (Reconnaissance), which has detachments in Fall City and Seward, are staying on at the bases. Guard officials say those numbers will decrease as the year progresses.

During the hour-long ceremony, the demobilizing Soldiers and their families were congratulated for their work by a variety of military and governmental leaders including Lt. Gov. David Heinemann, Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke and the mayors of Nebraska City and Falls City.

Sgt. Darin Louis of Falls City's Detachment 1, 173rd Chemical Co. (Recon/Decon), was one of those Soldiers. He said he felt proud of what he and his counterparts accomplished during 2002.

"It's a relief to be done, to go back to my civilian job," said Louis, an industrial technologies teacher from Rockport, Mo. "I'm glad that I got to serve and do what I did this year, but I'm equally glad to be able to go back to my

Helping Families Reach Out



Photo by Dave Nore

Local Business Gives Troops A Few Minutes: Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, receives 630 calling cards from Eric Stewart, general manager, and Jon Tucker, sales manager of Performance Dodge, Lincoln on Wednesday, Jan. 14 at the state headquarters of the Nebraska National Guard. The 120-minute cards were donated as a part of a cars sales promotion sponsored by Performance Dodge Lincoln during the month of December. The cards will be distributed to Soldiers deployed overseas allowing them to call home at no cost.

Guard Soldiers depart Nebraska with optimism

By Spc. Steve Hardesty
Staff Writer

A capacity crowd of family, friends, and elected officials filled the auditorium of Lincoln North Star High School, Dec. 7, to wish the troops of the 267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance), Nebraska Army National Guard, good luck and Godspeed on their upcoming deployment.

The 267th, which is based out of Lincoln, has detachments in Hastings and Gering. Approximately 200 Soldiers will report to Fort Riley, Kan. before departing for the Middle East to assist troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

There was a sense of trepidation, yet there was also a sense of optimism during the ceremony that took place 62 years to the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked, sending the United States into the World War II.

Sgt. 1st Class Joel Allison, a

section sergeant for the main support team of the 267th said there is a little apprehension among the troops ready to mobilize.

"But we anticipate a lot of great things," said Allison. "The kids in the unit are pumped."

During the ceremony elected officials from throughout the area expressed their pride in the members of the 267th and expressed their wishes for a successful mission and a safe return home.

"They are well trained, dedicated and they know what their mission is," said Lt. Gov. Dave Heineman. "We stand behind these young men and women because they put their lives on the line to protect freedom for all of us. We are all enormously proud of them for what they are about to do."

Many of the Soldiers from the 267th are leaving behind civilian occupations and college education. More importantly, the Soldiers are leaving their friends and families behind

during their deployment.

"We'll take it one day at a time," said Sgt. Sara Dvorak, a logistics specialist with the 267th. "It's going to change everything but I hope for the best."

According to unit officials, the organization will do everything it can to keep family members up to date on how the members of the 267th are doing overseas.

According to Capt. Michael Wescamp, commander of the 267th Ord. Co., a monthly newsletter will be going out to family members.

"This deployment will have a big impact on the families," said Corine Stucker, wife of Sgt. 1st Class Randy Stucker. "We'll stand together as a family and support our Soldiers."

Lincoln mayor Coleen Seng encouraged the loved ones of the troops.

"You are making a great sacrifice," Seng remarked. "And we will support you, your friends and your families."



Take Cover: Staff Sgt. Jim Gonzalez and other members of Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion, take cover behind a crop of trees before attempting to cross a road during individual movement training at the Francis Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings. The training site was home to a revolutionary mobilization training effort recently as members of the Kearney-based unit prepared for their deployment to the Middle East in Nebraska.

Changing Course

■ Deploying Army Guard Soldiers undergo revolutionary mobilization training at Hastings

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The training wasn't necessarily all that unique.

The location, on the other hand, was.

For the first time in memory, Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers began the opening phases of their post-mobilization training in Nebraska rather than at some active duty Army post.

The Soldiers, members of Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion, concentrated on such Soldier skills as individual movement techniques, land navigation and survival in a chemical or biological environment under the ever-watchful eyes of fellow Nebraska Army Guardsmen on the wide open plains of the Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings, Neb.

The training is part of a new Nebraska initiative designed to prepare deploying Soldiers more quickly than past mobilization techniques designed during the Cold War. These techniques have recently drawn the ire of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

Nebraska Guard officials say they hope that the new training initiative, designed to save a mobilized unit valuable time by providing it with concentrated training before it departs Nebraska, will eventually allow Soldiers to be called up for less time than the 18-months that Reserve Component troops currently serving in the Persian Gulf are facing.

Lt. Col. Patricia Hager, commander of troops for the Hastings training, said that by staying in Nebraska, the Guard was actually able to consolidate several weeks of mandatory training into a little more than a week of instruction. That should hopefully mean that the soldiers will stay at the active duty mobilization station at Fort Riley, Kan., for a shorter

time.

"That (could mean) less time that they will have to be away from the families as well," said Hager.

Co. B, 735th Trans. Bn., was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom on Jan. 5. They began their training at Hastings on Jan. 9 and remained there until deploying to Fort Riley on Jan. 17.

During that time, said Capt. Ryan Earleywine, commander of the Kearney-based company that has detachments in McCook and Lexington, the Soldiers were able to accomplish a wide variety of training that would've taken them weeks to do if they had deployed directly to Fort Riley, Kan., like previous units had.

The key, said Earleywine, was the availability of trainers.

"The location doesn't matter," said Earleywine. "The real benefit is we didn't have to come up with the trainers. We could focus on the training."

Just a year earlier, Earleywine was mobilized with members of Kearney's Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th Transportation Battalion, which spent several months training at Kearney and Fort Riley before being demobilized in May.

Earleywine was reassigned from his position as battalion maintenance officer to take command of Co. B just days before the mobilization. He said his previous unit was required to conduct the majority of its post-mobilization training from within its own ranks.

"They don't really provide you with any individual training at Fort Riley," he said. "The only training they provide you is weapons qualification, (nuclear, biological and chemical) gas chamber and a field training exercise."

"Anything else that we did, we provided the trainers for," he added.

Unlike the Fort Riley training, Nebraska provided approximately 50 instructors — the bulk of which came from



Lifesaving Training: Staff Sgt. Rich Kerst demonstrates his ability to successfully administer nerve agent antidote to Staff Sgt. Sherri Read, an instructor from Camp Ashland's 1-209th Regiment (Noncommissioned Officer Academy).

the Camp Ashland Regional Training Institute's full-time primary leadership development course.

The Co. B Soldiers actually had a better student-to-instructor ratio than students attending PLDC at Camp Ashland, said Command Sgt. Maj. David Hauschel of the 1st Battalion, 209th Regional Training Institute (Noncommissioned Officer Academy). Typically, classes at Camp Ashland have a ratio of 8 students for every instructor. At Hastings, the ratio was 1:4.

The amount of focus the state put into the training, said Earleywine, underscores the seriousness of the deployment the Soldiers are facing.

"We're going to a war zone," Earleywine said. "So the training is necessary."

During the course of the Hastings training, the Soldiers focused on a variety of important Soldier skills including providing first aid to their buddies, reacting to an ambush, navigating across a terrainless landscape at night and decontaminating personal equipment in a chemical environment.

The Soldiers also received some less direct, but just as important training as

well. While at Hastings, the Soldiers had an opportunity to work in their new environment while wearing personal body armor, carrying weapons with them and practicing clearing those weapons every time they entered a building...all important battlefield training the Guardsmen probably wouldn't have received in as much depth at Fort Riley, said Hager.

"We're looking out for their best interests," said Hager. "We can personalize it more here than they can at Fort Riley. I think we're also able to eliminate a lot of the downtime they would normally experience because we have the ability to be more flexible here."

Earleywine said the state assistance was making his job much easier. That's important considering the fact that he'd been in command less than a week.

"It's tough to assess where they've been in the training," he said. "I know some of the people here because I've worked with some of them at other places. But it's a challenge."

Having a cadre of independent trainers meant that the Guardsmen were able to receive uniform training designed to prepare them better for the specific



Where Do We Go From Here? Sgt. Dan Taylor (left) "consults" Pfc. Pete Stout's compass during a land navigation test at the Francis Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings, Neb. The training at Hastings was the first time that members of a mobilizing Nebraska Army National Guard unit conducted post-mobilization training in state before departing for the mobilization station — a situation that Guard officials hope will allow the company to depart overseas in a shorter amount of time, thus limiting the total time the unit is mobilized.

Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes



Grenade: Chief Warrant Officer Mark Lindgren practices throwing a grenade at an enemy bunker using a yellow tennis ball. Soldiers had to successfully hit two targets to pass this portion of the tactical lane.



Tight Rope: Staff Sgt. Matthew Starkey prepares to use a rope to pull on a barbed wire obstacle to ensure that it hasn't been booby-trapped while Sgt. Melinda Bolli (far left) provides cover. The Individual Movement Lane — one of several tactical courses that members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion, had to successfully complete during their mobilization training at the Francis Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings — tested Soldiers' skills in reacting to a variety of potential challenges, including their ability to successfully communicate with other members of their team.

mission.

"These are the basic Soldier skills that are going to keep them alive in a combat zone," he said.

The Soldiers seemed to be appreciating the training they were receiving, said Hager.

"I think they're doing well," she said. "I know they're tired because they're working hard. But they're smiling and joking. I think the morale seems pretty high."

Staff Sgt. Robert Schwanz agreed. A member of Lexington's Detachment 1, Schwanz normally would be working on a ranch near Gothenburg this time of the year. Instead, he was spending his time brushing up on his skills as a Soldier and as a noncommissioned officer.

"Trainings been going good," he said, smiling. "It's continuous."

The hardest part of the training, he added, was just getting used to constantly being in a military environment.

"Just to get to the mindset of having a good military bearing all of the time has probably been the most difficult thing for me," he said. "The work...I work on a ranch and work pretty hard any way. But the mindset and not being able to go home after work, that's the

most difficult."

Pfc. Thomas Sell, a truck driver from McCook's Detachment 2, said the Soldiers seemed to be responding to their situation in a pretty positive way, though.

"We seem to meshing up together," he said. "Most of us know each other from the different units because we drill together in Hastings six or seven months out of the year. So we're pretty much used to each other."

"I don't think there are going to be many conflicts over there," Sell added. "I think the only problem we may have in the unit is we've been together for so long we might start to get on each other's nerves. We each know each other's annoying traits."

According to Sell, a college student who is leaving behind a fiancée while he serves overseas, said the training at Hastings was extremely beneficial, adding that it had been a good refresher course. "It's going pretty fast. We're getting a lot done in a minimal amount of time."

Pfc. Pete Stout, a member of Alliance's 1057th Truck Company who will be going to the Middle East with Co. B instead of his parent unit which is cur-



Nowhere To Hide: Staff Sgt. Jim Gonzalez and other members of his squad take up positions on the grassy plains of the Francis Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings before conducting a simulated patrol. The Individual Movement Lane was designed to test soldiers' abilities to react successfully to a variety of challenges including barbed wire obstacles, enemy bunkers and artillery barrages.

rently serving in Kuwait, had the same assessment of the Hastings training.

"I've really enjoyed it," said Stout, a University of Nebraska-Kearney student who is putting college on hold so that he can serve. He is one of about 20 Soldiers from other Nebraska Army Guard units that have been reassigned to Co. B in order to fill unit vacancies. "It's giving us an opportunity to prepare for things."

"Before, when we'd do (training) at drill, we'd just kind of ho-hum through it," he said. "Now that we're actually going to be going into a situation where we may have to apply it, we're really taking it seriously."

On this particular day, Stout and Sgt. Dan Taylor from Lexington's Detachment 1 had been teamed together as part of the land navigation testing. Together, they had to successfully find three out of dozens of points using just pace counts and a compass.

Although the pancake-flat terrain of Hastings training area appeared to make the course seem easy, the two Soldiers quickly realized that their biggest asset was teamwork and common sense.

It was a lesson they both seemed to be taking to heart.

Stout said that the presence of the Camp Ashland instructors was invaluable.

"The fact that they're full-time National Guard, they relate to us a little better," said Stout. "They're from Nebraska, so they know kind of how things work here...how we work as a team. It's really beneficial to have people here that we see more often."

Both Stout and Sell said that even though serving overseas for a year meant numerous personal sacrifices, they were proud to be doing their part.

"I think it's important that we have military over there," said Sell. "If we leave right now, then we're going to destroy everything we've accomplished over there. We need to stay over there and finish the job we started."

"I don't have a girlfriend and I don't have any kids or anything like that," added Stout. "My family at home will still be there when I get home, but there are some older guys who have wives and families. So it's tougher for them."

"But for me...I'm ready to go." That attitude is going to take the unit a long way, said Earleywine, who is also leaving family at home, especially considering that transportation units currently serving in Iraq and Kuwait are being used for a variety of missions, not all of which are directly related to transportation.

"We've got to be prepared for a transportation mission, but we've also got to be prepared for other missions as well," he said. "From the looks of it, transportation units are not just doing transportation missions. They're doing escort, military police type missions as well."

"So that means we've really got to hone these skills down," he said, adding that the additional weapons familiarization training the unit will receive at Fort Riley will be key.

He added that the unit is ready for those challenges. "This unit has good leaders and good Soldiers," he said. "I feel extremely confident."

Soldiers learning new crowd control techniques

By **Spc. Lynn Weiland**
Staff Writer

Sept. 11, 2001, — a day that changed many things in America — was also a date that dramatically marked the increasing need for Homeland Security.

The Nebraska National Guard is an integral part of Nebraska's Homeland Security. That means, say officials, training for this mission is now more important than ever before.

Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th Transportation Battalion and Company B, 735th Main Support Battalion, experienced some of these new training changes and learned how they could assist in Homeland Security when they participated in Civil Disturbance and Quick Reaction Force training Oct. 31 – Nov. 2.

According to Lt. Col. Roger Meisinger, plans operations and military support officer, the civil defense mission of National Guard units has become more important than ever.

"One of the things that all states have been asked to do is to look at ways that the National Guard can help in Homeland Security," he said.

"Changing our annual civil disturbance training to incorporate more quick reaction force training is one way that we can increase our capabilities to help our state in any disaster, terrorist incident or weapons of mass destruction attack."

Meisinger said that although civil disturbance training has been conducted in Nebraska for years, it has now become important to include new types of training to focus on a unit's ability to work as a quick reaction force.

Sgt. 1st Class David Hanson, Homeland Defense training coordinator and quick reaction force training instructor agreed.

"Recent large call-ups showed that our Quick Reaction

■ As military faces new environments at home, overseas, state including new training into annual civil disturbance classes



Photo by Spc. Tegan Kucera

On The Move: Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 734th Transportation Battalion and Company B, 735th Main Support Battalion, move into position during training at the Greenleaf Training Center in November. As a result of real world needs, Guard officials are now incorporating more quick reaction force training into their annual civil disturbance school.

Force training needed to be changed. When we were assigned airport security after 9-11 and traffic control duty when flooding in Ogallala caused a section of Interstate 80 to collapse, we realized we needed to revamp our training programs," Hanson said.

The quick reaction force training isn't new. The three-day training program simply takes the traditional civil disturbance platoon program and adds tasks that support security missions. Many mobilized Guard Soldiers have already been called upon to function in this role.

In addressing the relevance of the training, Meisinger said: "If you look at what Army units including the Nebraska National Guard, are doing right

now in Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan, these Force Protection tasks that we are training these Soldiers on — how to search vehicles, how to search people, how to set up area and site security — are all missions that every unit is doing in overseas areas right now, everyday. You can never teach your Soldiers too many force protection skills."

"We think this training fits really well into the skills that they will need," Meisinger added. "Even though it is not an official METL (Mission Essential Task List) task, it is a force protection task that all Soldiers should have. No matter if you are combat arms, combat service support, transportation, chemical or armor, these

individual force protection skills are important for all Soldiers to know."

The recent QRF training included such things as pressure points and control techniques (PPCT), military police/riot baton training and three categories of search procedures.

"The philosophy behind PPCT is pain to compliance," said Hanson.

"You take nerve points and you apply pressure resulting in pain. This pain is then applied until the person or individual complies with the orders that you are giving."

The training seemed to impress the participants.

"Learning pressure point techniques is neat stuff," said Spc. Amanda McArthur of the

735th. "This training can help me out in many different situations. If we were called up for riot control, this training in PPCT would help me to know what to do. Likewise, if anything would happen to me at home, I could better take care of myself

Pfc. Ben Connealy of the 734th agreed.

"Pressure points control tactics make things a lot easier to control in a riot situation."

During the course of the training, the Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers also learned how to effectively and safely use a 36-inch military police club and a riot baton. They also learn how to use the tool in both offensive and defensive situations.

"The key to using the baton is applying it in certain manners, the same as in PPCT, to control people, to keep them further away from your position or to keep yourself safe," Hanson said.

The final classes centered on teaching the Soldiers about search procedures which were categorized in three different groups: individual, vehicle and building.

"The individual search is used if you have a person who you are detaining; they need to be searched for any kind of a weapon or item that might be of importance," said Hanson.

"The vehicle search is searching for explosives or weapons. The third category is a building search. This is searching a building or specific rooms, looking for devices that might be hidden in there somewhere."

Soldiers from Kearney, McCook and Lexington were the third group to undergo the new quick reaction force training at the Greenleaf Training site in Hastings.

Meisinger said Nebraska's goal is to eventually have five 60-soldier platoons trained up across the state.

Greene retires from Air Guard after 38 years in uniform

By **Senior Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino**
Staff Writer

Brig. Gen. Edward "Ned" Greene, of Lincoln, retired recently from the Nebraska Air National Guard after 38 years of military service, where he served as assistant adjutant general, Headquarters, Nebraska Air National Guard.

Greene began his military career in 1966 when he joined the Air Guard in Baltimore, Md., as a navigator, and then ultimately served as a pilot in the HU-16 Albatross, O-2 Sky-master and C-7 Caribou aircraft.

In 1979, he joined the Nebraska Air Guard, where he flew the RF-4C Phantom II, ultimately serving as chief of the command post in 1987, then in 1994 was named commander of the base medical squadron.

Under his command, the squadron was rated exceptionally high on several Air Force health services inspections. The squadron also earned the Marrs Award for the Most Outstanding Medical Squadron in the Air National Guard.

In 1997, he was appointed chief of staff, Headquarters, Nebraska Air National Guard, then in 1999, assistant

"Most of what I have done in the last 38 years of my life has been influenced by my membership in the Guard. It steered me in the right direction."

— **Brig. Gen. Edward "Ned" Greene**

adjutant general. He also piloted the 155th Air Refueling Wing's current KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft.

In civilian life, Greene graduated with a doctor of Dental Surgery degree from Baltimore College of Dental Surgery and practiced dentistry in Maryland and Nebraska.

He currently is chief of dental services at the Lincoln Veterans Administration Medical Center and also serves as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Dentistry in Lincoln.

"I feel very privileged to have served and feel like I owe the Guard for more than what I received," Greene said.

"I couldn't have asked for anything more. Most of what I have done in the last 38 years of my life has been influenced by my membership in the Guard. It steered me in the right direction."

Under his leadership, he is credited with numerous accomplishments, including overseeing a Phase II estimated

\$58 million base construction project and completion of the \$3.3 million Air/Army Guard medical building project.

He led the foundation for "Partner in Peace," an unprecedented peacetime training commitment with the Czech Republic, and was instrumental in launching STARBASE Nebraska, the Adjutant General's Thunder Run, Honor's Day and Family Day.

"Brigadier General Greene was energetic and visionary during a time when the Nebraska Air National Guard needed these qualities," said Maj Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska.

"He will always be remembered for initiating community programs like the Adjutant's General Thunder Run and being the motivating force behind our very successful STARBASE program."

Brig. Gen. Mark Musick, chief of staff, Joint Forces Headquarters, who has worked with Greene for more than 20 years, said Greene was successful in each position he held, leading the way to many improvements.

"It was an honor having him in the Nebraska Air Guard. His passion for aviation and piloting skills led him to involvement in the STARBASE youth education programs," Musick said. "It was his drive that brought the program to Nebraska — a program that positively influences the fifth-graders who participate."



Greene

Education Notebook

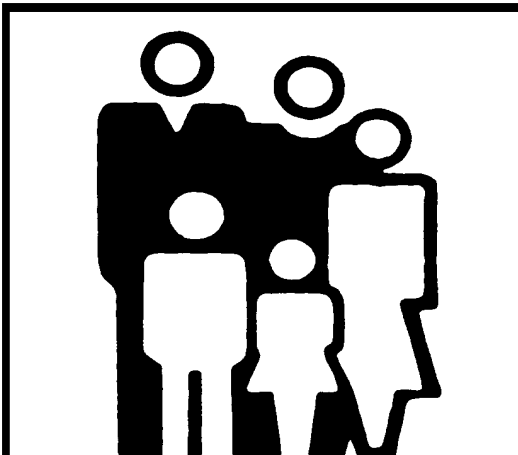
■ New Fiscal Year 2004 Army National Guard Education Guide - useful resource tool

The 2004 version of the Army National Guard Education Guide is now available. This informative "resource tool" is posted on the Virtual Armory website at www.virtualarmory.com. It can be found under the Education Tab.

In addition to the latest educational information the 2004 Education Guide incorporates Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP), Montgomery GI Bill-Kicker, and Commissioning Program information.

The website provides a host of information concerning all educational benefits. Visit it today.

For more information, contact Chief Warrant Officer Robyn Huskey at (402) 309-7313 or email her at robyn.huskey@ne.ngb.army.mil.



Guard Family NEWS You Can Use

IRS provides critical information for taxpayers serving in the U.S. Armed Forces

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service is reminding taxpayers serving in the military to take advantage of all tax exclusions and filing and payment extensions available to them.

Exclusions:

Members of the U.S. Armed Forces who serve in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area can exclude certain pay from income. Enlisted personnel, warrant officers and commissioned warrant officers can exclude:

- ♦Active duty pay earned in any month served in a combat zone;
- ♦Imminent danger/hostile fire pay and military pay earned while hospitalized as a result of wounds, disease or injury incurred in the combat zone;
- ♦A reenlistment bonus if the voluntary extension or reenlistment occurs in a month served in combat zone;
- ♦Pay for accrued leave earned in any month served in combat zone. (The Department of Defense must determine that the unused leave was earned during that period);
- ♦Pay received for duties as a member of the Armed Forces in clubs, messes, post and station theaters and

other non-appropriated fund activities earned in a month served in a combat zone;

♦Awards received for suggestions, inventions or scientific achievements because of a submission made in a month in a combat zone.

A commissioned officer (other than a commissioned warrant officer) may exclude pay according to the rules above, but the amount of the exclusion is limited to the highest rate of enlisted pay (plus imminent danger/hostile fire pay received) for each month during any part of which he or she served in a combat zone. For 2002, this limit was \$5,532.90 and for 2003, it is \$5,882.70.

Extensions:

The IRS automatically extends the deadline for filing tax returns, paying taxes, filing claims for refund and taking other actions related to federal income tax for U.S. Armed Forces personnel serving in a combat zone. The IRS also extends the deadline for those in the U.S. Armed Forces deployed overseas away from their permanent duty station in support of operations in a qualified hazardous duty area but outside the qualified hazardous duty area.

The deadline for filing returns, mak-

ing payments or taking any other action with the IRS is extended for at least 180 days after:

- ♦The last day of qualifying combat zone service, or
- ♦The last day of any continuous qualified hospitalization for injury from service in the combat zone.

Combat Zones

A combat zone is any area the President of the United States designates by Executive Order as an area in which the U.S. Armed Forces are engaging or have engaged in combat. Usually, an area becomes a combat zone and ceases to be a combat zone on the dates the President designates by Executive Order.

The following is a comprehensive list of combat zones:

The following locations (and airspace above) in the Persian Gulf area were designated as a combat zone beginning Jan. 17, 1991.

The area includes the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman, the part of the Arabian Sea that is north of 10 degrees north latitude and west of 68 degrees east longitude, the Gulf of Aden and the total land areas of Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

♦Kosovo area, beginning Mar. 24, 1999 — Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Albania, the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea north of the 39th Parallel;

♦Afghanistan, beginning Sept. 19, 2001.

Public Law 104-117 designates three parts of the former Yugoslavia as a Qualified Hazardous Duty Area, to be treated as if it were a combat zone, beginning Nov. 21, 1995 — Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Macedonia.

In addition, the Department of Defense has certified these locations for combat zone tax benefits due to their direct support of military operations in the Afghanistan combat zone (Operation Enduring Freedom), beginning on the listed dates:

- ♦Pakistan, Tajikistan and Jordan, Sept. 19, 2001;
- ♦Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, Sept. 21, 2001;
- ♦Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Oct. 1, 2001;
- ♦Philippines, Jan. 9, 2002;
- ♦Yemen, Apr. 10, 2002;
- ♦Djibouti, July 1, 2002.

For more information, look up the IRS' webpage at www.irs.gov

NEALS continued from page 1.

Rear Area Operations Center, is currently working in Mosul as a battle captain in support of the 101st Airborne Division. It's a job he's been serving in since his unit entered Iraq last March during the height of the war in Iraq.

His wife, Capt. Marna Neal, is a member of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Civil Engineering Squadron where she serves as a full-time base architect. She took leave of absence last October to take a temporary civilian position in Baghdad with a Pittsburgh-based firm involved in the rebuilding efforts in Iraq.

Now, she's working on a wide array of projects ranging from the rebuilding of the Iraqi water, electrical and oil infrastructure to the reconstruction of dozens of schools, hospitals and fire stations.

Needless to say, the past year has been filled with numerous life-changing experiences for the Neals as they learn to keep a marriage alive through the stress of military deployments and seemingly endless separations.

According to Martin, separations have been the major part of their lives since marrying on July 4, 2002. Shortly after their wedding, Martin departed for a five-month school at Fort Lee, Va.

Shortly after completing the school and moving to Lincoln, Martin was reassigned to the 41st RAOC as an administrative officer. His new unit was called to active duty on Feb. 14, 2003.

"Marna says that during the 18 months that we have been married, we have seen each other only about 90 days," said Martin in an e-mail interview. "Give or take a few."

Marna said the past year has been difficult, but it's also brought her husband and her closer together as a couple than either one of them ever expected.

"We have been forced to communicate by phone and e-mail," she said in a second e-mail interview. "You can't rightfully give someone the silent treatment when you only have time to write a short e-mail or only get one 15-minute phone call per week."

"Of course, due to the circumstances we are in, we have come to appreciate life and each other much more," she added.

Martin agreed.

"I never imagined being separated from her for so long after being married," he said. "Being a Soldier and a career officer in the Army — regardless of whether it is on active duty or in the reserves — always carries with it the possibility of being separated from your family. However, after being way from each other for the first five months of our marriage, the mobilization (and) deployment of the unit came as a shock, even though it was expected."

Since October, the Neals have been able to see each other three times. The first came when Marna traveled to Mosul on official business. Martin was able to meet his wife at the airport. Marna said it was a quick visit.

"The first time consisted of a handshake and sitting on the luggage carrier outside of the Mosul Airport talking for about 15 minutes," she said.

In December, however, the couple was able to spend more quality time together. Instead of traveling to Nebraska on his two-week leave, Martin opted instead to spend several days in Baghdad

with his wife. It was a unique "date" to say the least, both Neals said.

"We went to dinner at the Al Rasheed Hotel, which is inside the Green Zone in Baghdad," Martin said. "We had some traditional Iraqi food and also (were) able to shop for some Christmas presents for our family at the stores they have set up in the lobby of the hotel."

"There is no normal date in Baghdad, Iraq," added Marna, who lives in a tiny, shipping container-sized trailer about 250 meters from the Saddam Hussein's former Presidential Palace that sits in the heart of the city on the banks of the Tigris River.

"We sat out by the palace pool and talked about what life might be like when we actually live together in Lincoln, Nebraska. We bought bootleg movies from the Iraq 'Haji' Market and watched them on a laptop."

Marna said it was the most unusual 'date' that she'd ever been on.

While watching the movie, the Neals heard that an American C-130 Gunship was preparing to strike a target in Baghdad. Along with several other contract employees, the Neals decided to rush up to the roof of the palace to watch the airstrike. "We could hear it firing, but did not see it because we didn't make it to the rooftop in time," he said.

The Neals did get an opportunity to see something — or rather someone — else unique though. During a stop at the dining facility, Martin noticed a sign at the head table noting that Congressman Tom Osborne was visiting the area. The Neals

decided to wait to see if they could meet the former Nebraska Cornhusker head coach.

This time, they were completely successful.

"It was great to see someone from Nebraska," said Martin. "He asked me how I thought that civilian employers were supporting the Reserve Components who were deployed in support of the War on Terrorism. I told him that since September 11th, I thought that the response was overwhelmingly positive."

"While working as the personnel officer in Scottsbluff, we had the responsibility to mobilize two different groups of Soldiers who provided security at the Winter Olympics," he added. "Some employers of our Soldiers continued to pay them their regular wage, some made up the difference in their pay if they were making less and some still allowed them to keep their insurance while serving the their state and nation."

Marna said she too was surprised to be able to meet Osborne in Iraq.

"Needless to say, the coaching situation was not a subject we broached," she said, adding that most politicians and entertainers typically want to spend time with members of the military, not civilians. "He was interested to know that I had a Teammate back home at Lincoln High that I have been keeping in touch with, though."

Throughout his visit to Baghdad, Martin said he was struck with how bizarre it was to be spending time with his wife in the middle of a war-zone.

"Having the opportunity to see my wife in Iraq is unusual and comforting at the same time," he

said. "Being in a place where I carry a loaded weapon with me and where there are people who want to cause harm to us because we are American is a bit unusual to say the least."

"We will each be able to have our own stories to tell our friends and family when we return home."

Marna agreed, adding that being together in Iraq is never the couple's main focus. Rather, they're both there to do the best jobs possible.

"We worry about each other just like we would if one or the other of us were at home," she said. "We actually talk and e-mail much less than before I came here."

"We are both very focused on our personal situations and missions, but this experience does help us better understand what the other is going through," said Marna.

And it has been dangerous. For example, on Christmas a phone call from her family woke her up. Moments later, a rocket exploded across the river from the palace compound, forcing her to take cover under her bed.

A few minutes later, the phone rang again. This time it was from Martin.

"All within a period of a half hour...and that was my first day off since I had arrived," she said. "I was going to sleep in."

As far as Valentine's Day, mission requirements meant that they probably wouldn't be able to spend it together. Instead, they're looking forward to spending their second wedding anniversary together — their first anniversary since their wedding.

They both agree it can't happen soon enough.

Want to lead?

Consider becoming a warrant officer

By Chief Warrant Officer David Fusco
Command Chief Warrant Officer

Nebraska Army National Guard Warrant Officers of today are highly specialized, professionals, trainers and leaders who operate, maintain, administer and manage the Army National Guard's technical systems, support activities and equipment.

Unlike the past when technical proficiency was the sole responsibility of the warrant officer, today it requires leadership qualities, managerial functions, and continued training and education to keep up with the latest technological developments.

Who can become a warrant officer in the Nebraska National Guard?

Basically, anyone who has the desire to become a professional, a leader and a respected technical expert in his or her field, can.

The rewards of being a warrant officer are more than tangible benefits. People look up to warrant officers and put their trust in them. Warrant officers also know they are doing something for a higher purpose.

If a person is a sergeant or higher in the Army National Guard or the U.S. Army Reserve, a transitioning active component Soldier, a current or former warrant officer, he or she just might be the person who can become a warrant officer. Basic requirements include:

- be between the ages of 18 and 46;
- score 110 or above on the General Aptitude Area Test;
- be a High School Graduate or pass the General Education Development test (GED);
- be a US citizen by birth or naturalization;
- be able to successfully pass all events on the Army Physical Fitness Test;
- meet certain mandatory technical qualifications for your specific Military Occupational Specialty (MOS);
- meet certain medical, security and licensing requirements (if required by one's MOS).

Applicants for initial appointment to aviator career fields must meet additional eligibility requirements.

To get more details, check with a local recruiter, or talk to any warrant officer.

If a person meets the prerequisites to become a warrant officer, he or she can begin the next step by requesting a pre-determination packet. This packet is prepared with the help of either a local recruiter or one's full-time support personnel. If a person's packet is approved by the National Guard Bureau and the Department of the Army, he or she can be considered for appointment as a Warrant Officer Candidate.

Following approval of a pre-determination packet, the next step to becoming a warrant officer is leadership training at the Warrant Officer Candidate School. There are two options for completing this training:

- A 6-week active Army resident school at Fort Rucker, Alabama;
- Two 2-week phases of War-

rant Officer Candidate School - Reserve Component at Fort Rucker, Ala., taken back-to-back or separately.

Upon completion of Warrant Officer Candidate School, Soldiers must complete the Warrant Office Basic Course within two years. This training ensures that a person is Army certified in his or her career MOS and that a person can effectively perform the required duties in the field chosen.

Soldiers have the option of attending active component or reserve component courses. Depending on one's MOS, the length of the active component's courses can vary from five to 20 weeks. In many cases, the reserve component's courses are a correspondence phase and one or two weeks of active duty for training (resident phase).

Upon successful completion of the Warrant Officer Candidate School and Warrant Officer Basic Course, Soldiers become a certified warrant officer in the Nebraska Army National Guard. But remember, this is just the beginning.

As warrant officers continue their careers, there will be new responsibilities and continuing chances to learn. Education continues through Warrant Officer Advanced training, Warrant Officer Staff training and Warrant Officer Senior Staff training.

As a result warrant officers can handle more demanding positions and take on greater responsibilities.

So, should you become a warrant officer? Can you become a warrant officer? Sure you can.

Is it going to be easy? No. In fact, it's going to be challenging, both physically and mentally, yet rewarding. Ask yourself, do I possess the abilities and technical expertise in my field? Do I have leadership qualities? Can I be better utilized in the Warrant Officer corps where I could mentor, coach, train and teach subordinates?

If your answer to these questions is yes then you should consider becoming a Nebraska National Guard warrant officer.

A list of warrant officer vacancies is available on www.neguard.com. Click on the State CCWO link for information regarding vacancies and additional information of interest to warrant officers.

The following officers can answer questions concerning the requirements and benefits of becoming a Nebraska National Guard warrant officer. Contact them today.

•Maj. Catherine L. Stephens, State Recruiting and Retention Office, 309-7160; e-mail: catherine.stephens@ne-ngb.army.mil

•Chief Warrant Officer David P. Fusco, command chief warrant officer, 309-7116; david.fusco@ne-ngb.army.mil

•Chief Warrant Officer Harold L. Bingham; harold.bingham@ne-ngb.army.mil

•Chief Warrant Officer Lee Wubbels; lee.wubbels@ne-ngb.army.mil

•Chief Warrant Officer Carrie Hancock, 309-7541; carrie.hancock@ne-ngb.army.mil

Retiree News-N-Notes

■ Military retirees see increase to pay

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFPN) — An estimated 150,000 military retirees saw an increase in their pay Feb. 2.

The National Defense Authorization Act, enacted in November, significantly modified a long-standing law preventing retirees from receiving full retired pay if they also received disability pay from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The new law allows concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability pay for retirees with more than 20 years of service and a disability rating of 50 percent or more. This restored pay will be phased in over a 10-year period that began Jan. 1.

Retirees are not required to take any action to receive the additional pay.

Defense Finance and Accounting Service officials have already identified eligible retirees and began making adjustments to their military retired pay.

The first payments are due Feb. 2 for the law change that was effective Jan. 1. The additional funds also will be paid Feb. 2 based on entitlement for Jan. 1 to 31.

The restored pay is paid on the same schedule as current military retired pay. Recurring payments will be made

on the first business day of each month based on entitlement for the month before.

For the majority of military retirees, the additional money is taxable income and subject to federal tax withholding.

One category of military retirees who are eligible for additional funds but will not be paid Feb. 2, are those who receive retired pay based on a disability percentage instead of years of service.

Further guidance is needed from the Department of Defense

Bulletin Board

Monthly Retiree Breakfasts

Army National Guard: 8 a.m., first Monday of each month
Place: T&R's Garden Cafe (48th and Cornhusker Highway)
3939 No. 48th St., Lincoln, NE 68504

Air National Guard: 8:30 a.m., last Monday of each month.
Place: Pantry Restaurant 2548 South 48th Street., Lincoln, NE 68506

Nebraska Military Retiree Council Meetings

Time: 1 p.m. (Unless otherwise noted)
Second Wednesday of each month (excluding December.)
Location: Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Conference Room, Adjutant General's Office Building.

Reminder: When you reach 59 (not 59-and-a-half as it has been in the past) and were a member or a former member of the Army National Guard and have 20 or more years of service, please contact Sgt. 1st Class Susan Wendling for assistance in applying for retirement. Additionally, anyone knowing about the death of a soldier or a soldier's spouse who was or is drawing retirement should contact Wendling at (402) 309-7318 or Staff Sgt. Jennifer Kramer at (402) 309-7319.

to determine how the law will be applied in these cases. Once guidance is received, payments will be made retroactive to Jan. 1. An estimated 2,800 military retirees fall into this category.

For more details regarding who is eligible for the restored pay and how payments will be made, visit www.dfas.mil and see the topics under "Retired and Annuitant Pay," or visit the myPay Web site at <https://mypay.dfas.mil>.

LEMPKE ON LEADERSHIP

Fortitude, Persistence shape world

Maj. Gen. Roger P. Lempke
Adjutant General

Many consider Winston Churchill the greatest statesman of the 20th Century.

His personal fortitude and persistence forged an early wedge into Hitler's aggressions, opening cracks that would hasten the end to his hellish regime.

Only serious readers of history know of Churchill's tribulations during the decade leading up to World War II. Basically driven from any significant role in British governance, he nevertheless continued to aggressively warn Great Britain, and indeed the World, about the emerging Nazi threat.

His fortitude and persistence saved a languishing career and then positioned him to dominate the world stage during the war years.

My favorite quotation about persistence comes from President Calvin Coolidge.

"Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and Determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On' has solved and will always solve the problems of the human race."

A common definition of fortitude is "strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain or adversity with courage." Great leaders have the capacity to endure horrible professional and personal struggles and persist in meeting their goals.

Perhaps no other situation is more difficult for hard charging professionals and leaders than career set backs. Setbacks on the battlefield or in the corporate world are often temporary—there is always another day and another "battle."

But personal career setbacks can seem overwhelmingly deleterious.

Churchill served as First Lord of the Admiralty, roughly analogous in prestige to Secretary of Defense, at a young age beginning in 1911 before being dumped during a change in government in 1915.

His career in politics then followed an uneven course of victories and defeats that eventually led to being virtually banned from any circle of influence during the 1930's.

For a politician and statesman, there is no greater humiliation. But Churchill would bear his many crosses well. While others resorted to careers outside of politics and government his personal fortitude "kept him in the game."

Never knowing if a significant stature was in store for him personally, he persisted with a message to prepare for another major war during a time when few wanted to even consider the possibility.

Gradually, as Hitler's intentions become more painfully apparent Great Britain began to realize that appeasement would not contain this maniacal dictator. Churchill's steadfast resistance to Nazism and Hitler's demands would resonate progressively to a people growing fearful for the survival of their island nation.

On Sept. 1, 1939, Churchill was summoned by the Prime Minister for a chair on the War Cabinet. He would soon learn that First Lord of the Admiralty would be his again—after 24 years.

Of course, his rise to Prime Minister and subsequent heroics are well known. His fortitude and persistence positioned him to serve the United Kingdom in a desperate time of need.

The geography of personal career development is defined by hills, valleys and circuitous routes.

Fortitude and persistence are vital to navigating the terrain successfully to eventually attain our goals and aspirations.

Careers are seldom one upward move after another. Lateral assignments and even demotions are going to happen. Personal fortitude and persistence will eventually win the day—ask Winston Churchill.

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Major
Michael P. Akins
Randall S. Ames
Donald E. Kneifl Jr.

Captain
Steven R. Elmer

First Lieutenant
Andrew P. Schaaf

Master Sergeant
Brian P. Stark
John A. Valasek

Staff Sergeant
Timothy C. Blatt
Thomas W. Jones
Michael A. Kinghorn
Robert R. Schwanz
Matthew L. Starkey

Sergeant
Nicholas R. Brand
Jay D. Hanna
David S. Hild
Clinton H. Huey
Edward E. Minary
Brandon L. Schade
Timothy J. VanLaningham

Specialist
Brandon L. Bennett
Chadwick J. Coon
Chase A. Davis
John E. Ebert Jr.
William G. Fellers IV
Dajon N. Ferrell
Lorena Garza
Carlos E. Granados
Michael D. Green
Michael A. Hillgren
Hunter C. Isley
Trevor J. Knecht
Marcos A. Moreno
Brian D. Nielsen
Anthony D. Perry
David T. Poppas

William J. Scholte
Joshua T. Slizoski
Lindsey M. Snowdon
Amy M. Snyder
Blake A. Sohl
Adam L. Talbott
Kyla M. Triplett
Amanda L. Vincent
Seth M. Wiesen

Private First Class
Lance T. Allen
Nicholas M. Broshears
Andrew C. Ciha
Todd W. Courter
Jason W. Delancey
Dustin J. Douglass
Clinton J. Forbes
Joseph C. Haag
Dawayne E. Hagan
David J. Hoferer
David L. McIntosh
Christopher S. Mitchell
Robbie L. Nelson
Jeremy A. Poulsen
Brady J. Pulliam
Linsey J. Schledewitz
Thomas I.A. Sell
Cody M. Splattstoesser
Michael L. Starke
Casey J. Sullivan
Chad N. Troxel
Ryan M. Zerbe
Ryan R. Jensen
Steven K. Kennett
Nathan F. Mihm
Matthew A. Tacha
Oscar M. Valdez

Private Two
Zachary L. Brueningsen
Joseph W. Carder
Betty M. Day
Tiara R. Ford
Russell W. Kelley
Matthew A. Nestander
David A. Porto
Lillie D. Stander
Rachell M. Weisgerber

Air National Guard
Brigadier General
Robert Bailey

Colonel
Jon Fago

Lieutenant Colonel
Larry Murray

Senior Master Sergeant
Melvin Kauk

Master Sergeant
Kimberly Gaddis

Technical Sergeant
Jason Jones
Christine Green
Ryan Royse

Staff Sergeant
Lucas Buike
Mark Durant
Jason Loch
Danielle Nuss
Joseph Woodshank

Senior Airman
Dustin Anderson
Richard Anderson
Steven Bik
Douglas Gerdes
Jessica Hart
Benjamin Hatcher
Thomas Hersch
Melaine Heydon
Adam Jacobitz
David Kinsel
Brenton Neville
Jarell Roach
Steven Saalfeld
Adam Schaaf
Kary Schmit
Joshua Sears
Jimmy Ton
Jarod Warneke

Airman
Michael Ross

Sgt. 1st Class David B. Kruse
Sgt. 1st Class Laura L. Simonds
Sgt. 1st Class Leonard R. Thorne Jr.
Staff Sgt. Robert V. Anderson
Sgt. Paul N. McConnell
Sgt. Alan D. Taylor
Sgt. Douglas K. Watson

Harland Parrish

Air National Guard
Brig. Gen. Edward H. Greene II
Senior Master Sgt. Kermit C. Petersen
Master Sgt. Rex A. Anderson
Tech. Sgt. Patrick S. Wood

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Meritorious Service Medal
Maj. Brett W. Andersen
Maj. Thomas A. Fitch
Capt. Steven R. McClure
Chief Warrant Officer William E. Hennigar Jr.
Chief Warrant Officer David L. Wenge
Chief Warrant Officer Paul L. Schuster
Command Sgt. Maj. Richard J. Burch
Command Sgt. Maj. Ivan D. Ossian
Sgt. 1st Class Susan R. Wendling
Sgt. 1st Class Gary W. Wilhelm
Staff Sgt. Gregory M. O'Connell
Staff Sgt. Jennifer J. Kramer
Staff Sgt. Jocelyn J. Kuta
Staff Sgt. Kristine A. Loeck
Staff Sgt. Timothy T. Reeck
Staff Sgt. Terrance L. Parolek
Sgt. Penny F. Hytrek
Cpl. Brandi M. Vrba
Staff Sgt. Sara K. Wells

Army Commendation Medal
Lt. Col. Judd H. Lyons
Maj. Darin M. Krueger
1st Lt. Tracy A. Ortgies
Sgt. 1st Class Jerome V. Donner
Sgt. 1st Class David B. Kruse
Staff Sgt. Matt J. Rubenthaler
Staff Sgt. William J. Vansetten Jr.
Sgt. Paul N. McConnell
Sgt. Jeremy J. Preister
Staff Sgt. Tarissa R. Batenhorst

Army Achievement Medal
Maj. Randall S. Ames
Maj. Kevin L. Hittle
Maj. Matthew R. Parsley
Capt. John F. Banister
Capt. Steven W. Gocsek
Chief Warrant Officer Marty J. French
Command Sgt. Maj. Barney J. Solomon
Master Sgt. Gary L. Bloomberg
Master Sgt. Steven M. Klein
Sgt. 1st Class William B. Bieber
Sgt. 1st Class Eric S. Clyne
Sgt. 1st Class Dwane R. Cochran
Sgt. 1st Class David A. Davis
Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Erickson
Sgt. 1st Class Gregory M. McBride
Sgt. 1st Class Sidney W. Vose
Sgt. 1st Class Gary W. Wilhelm
Sgt. 1st Class Kerry D. Wyatt
Staff Sgt. Terence G. Burns
Staff Sgt. Richard D. Claussen
Staff Sgt. Carl K. Dehling
Staff Sgt. Courtney L. Miller
Staff Sgt. Eric E. Pearson
Staff Sgt. Cesar A. Rivas
Staff Sgt. Gus R. Swanson
Staff Sgt. Clint J. Thompson

Sgt. Norman E. Clash
Sgt. Anthony Finlay
Sgt. Ronald S. Halsted
Sgt. Daniel Huenick
Sgt. Richard J. Steele
Sgt. Jeremy C. Strack
Spc. Connie L. Jansen
Spc. Travis M. Krans
Spc. Michael A. Schafer
Pfc. John B. McCrory

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal
Capt. Michael P. Akins
Sgt. 1st Class Steven S. Burns
Sgt. 1st Class John P. Hartig
Sgt. 1st Class Randall L. Peterson
Sgt. 1st Class Randall Schreck
Staff Sgt. Curtis C. Koehler

Nebraska National Guard Legion of Merit
Lt. Col. Daniel R. Peppers
Chief Warrant Officer David L. Wenge

Nebraska National Guard Meritorious Service Medal
Maj. Thomas A. Fitch
Command Sgt. Maj. Randall H. Schulz

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal
Capt. Craig W. Strong
Chief Warrant Officer Robyn R. Huskey
Sgt. Maj. Pamela M. Jones
Sgt. 1st Class Lynn J. Barnes
Sgt. 1st Class Michael S. Nagasawa
Sgt. 1st Class Susan E. Stevens
Staff Sgt. Nicholas E. Curto
Staff Sgt. Tomas C. Ortiz
Sgt. Matthew F. Rist
Spc. Mark J. Schoephoerster

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal
Capt. Brett Scholting
2nd Lt. William P. McGreer
Chief Warrant Officer Jeffrey M. Klintberg
1st Sgt. Ronald R. Marshall
Staff Sgt. Laura H. Hardesty
Staff Sgt. Michael L. Lederer
Staff Sgt. Charles E. Lindbloom
Staff Sgt. Jason E. Roberts
Staff Sgt. John G. Weddel
Sgt. Raymond U. Ekeh
Sgt. Anthony C. Finlay
Sgt. Teresa M. Lenz
Sgt. Terence T. Ricketts
Sgt. Marcus R. Schmidt
Sgt. Andrew T. Stratton
Spc. Brian W. Anderson

Spc. Andrew C. DeBoer
Spc. Kristine D. Dunn
Spc. Robert G. Kercher
Spc. Christopher W. Morehouse
Spc. Anthony W. Rischling
Spc. Jeremy A. Rose
Spc. Jonathan J. Simon
Spc. Michaela E. Tompkins
Spc. Mark D. Thompson
Spc. Amanda K. Watkins
Pfc. Nicholas G. Davids
Pfc. William H. Manley IV
Pvt. Bradley D. Kuhn

Nebraska National Guard Recruiting Achievement Medal
Sgt. 1st Class Howard S. Bartee
Sgt. Thomas A. Shipman

Air National Guard Legion of Merit
Col. Alan Malone

Meritorious Service Medal
Lt. Col. Daniel O. Black
Lt. Col. Jon F. Fago
Lt. Col. David E. Severson
Lt. Col. Robert L. Yager
Maj. James L. Dalton
Maj. Frederick S. Dowell
Chief Master Sgt. Jane A. Corkill
Senior Master Sgt. Lang W. Anderson III
Senior Master Sgt. Rex A. Anderson
Tech. Sgt. Shawn E. McEntarffer
Tech. Sgt. Patrick S. Wood

Air Force Commendation Medal
Master Sgt. Timothy D. Majerus
Senior Airman Robert J. Bogle

Air Force Achievement Medal
Tech. Sgt. Paul E. Thomas
Staff Sgt. Ryan W. Alston
Staff Sgt. Anthony M. Casella Jr.
Senior Airman Justus J. Foged
Senior Airman Nicholas T. Gentile

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal
Staff Sgt. Aaron J. Self
Airman 1st Class Anthony D. McEntarffer
Airman 1st Class Amanda L. Ruhs
Airman 1st Class Jeremy L. Wiemer

Taps

Donald Gross
Elwin Daugherty
Allison W. Ottens Jr.

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Maj. Roddrick F. Washington
Chief Warrant Officer Karla M. Welding
Command Sgt. Maj. Ivan D. Ossian
Sgt. Maj. David Nore
Sgt. 1st Class James E. Ehlers Jr.
Sgt. 1st Class Freddie R. Kleeb

Sgt. 1st Class David B. Kruse
Sgt. 1st Class Laura L. Simonds
Sgt. 1st Class Leonard R. Thorne Jr.
Staff Sgt. Robert V. Anderson
Sgt. Paul N. McConnell
Sgt. Alan D. Taylor
Sgt. Douglas K. Watson

Harland Parrish

Air National Guard
Brig. Gen. Edward H. Greene II
Senior Master Sgt. Kermit C. Petersen
Master Sgt. Rex A. Anderson
Tech. Sgt. Patrick S. Wood

Shorttakes

Air Guard flying units see new commanders

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

Colonel Jon Fago assumed command of the 155th Operations Group during a change of command ceremony held Jan. 10 at the Nebraska Air National Guard air base in Lincoln.

Fago, who was promoted to the rank of colonel Dec. 13, assumed command of the Nebraska Air National Guard group charged with overseeing flying operations. Fago had served as commander of the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron since the summer of 2002.

In assuming command of the 155th Operations Group, Fago succeeds Col. Steven L. Adams, who became commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing later that afternoon. The 155th ARW is a KC-135R Stratotanker unit stationed at the National Guard air base in Lincoln. An Air National Guard unit assigned to Air Mobility Command, the unit performs mid-air refueling missions around the globe.

Fago, the son of Donald A. and Marilyn L. Fagot of Sun City West, Ariz., is a 1975 graduate of West Point High School in West Point, Neb. He is a 1979 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy. He holds a masters degree in Science from the University of Southern California. Fago joined the Nebraska Air National Guard in August 1994.



Fago

Dalton

He is married to the former Cindy Molacek, the daughter of Lloyd and Katherine Molacek of Stanton, Neb. In civilian life, Fago is a pilot with Delta Airlines. The Fagos live in Lincoln. They have two children.

Taking command of the 173rd ARS is Lt. Col. Thomas Dalton Jr.

Dalton is a graduate of Laurel Concord High School and a 1984 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he earned his bachelor's degree in Mechanized Agriculture. He joined the Nebraska Air Guard in 1994 after transferring from the Iowa Air Guard at Sioux City where he was flight commander flying the A-7D and the F-16C.

He earned his commission in May 1984 after completing the Academy of Military Science at Knoxville, Tenn.

He is the son of the late Thomas R. and Helen M. Dalton of Georgetown, Texas. Dalton and his wife, Maj. Renee A. Dalton, live in Malcolm with their three sons. In civilian life, Dalton is a pilot with Continental Airlines.

Navrkal takes 168th Quartermaster helm

By Spc. Tegan Kucera
Staff Writer

The 168th Quartermaster (Petroleum Supply) Battalion brought in the New Year with a new commander in a change of command ceremony held at the Scottsbluff armory, Jan. 10, 2004.

Lt. Col. Michael Navrkal took command of the battalion from Lt. Col. Douglas Ladd.

In accepting command of the unit, which has nominal control over several units located in western Nebraska, Navrkal said he thinks the organization is already operating at a high level of excellence.

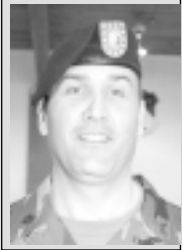
His goal is to help it reach even higher.

Navrkal credited the battalion's success to Ladd's leadership in having improved the unit during his command.

Navrkal is a resident of Highland Ranch, Colo.

He was born in 1960 in Nebraska City, Neb., and graduated from the University of Nebraska with a bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration.

He enlisted in the Army National Guard in 1979 and entered the Federal Officer Candidate School in April of



Navrkal



Photo by Spc. Tegan Kucera

Moving On: Lt. Col. Doug Ladd, outgoing 168th Quartermaster (Petroleum Supply) Battalion commander, passes the battalion flag to Col. Mark Voichoski, commander of the 67th Support Group.

1981. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in June of that same year.

He recently served on active duty as a logistics staff officer at the National Guard Bureau, in Washington, D.C., as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

the world today is forever changing and presenting new challenges.

Navrkal does not know what challenges lie ahead for him and the 168th, but is confident that the Battalion will be ready.

During the ceremony Ladd was the recipient of the Distinguished Order of Saint Martin, an honor for logisticians and a sign of respect for quartermasters

Brig. Gen. Walter Zincklew to Scottsbluff from Lincoln in order to attend the ceremony.

He said that today Soldiers expect to be working with computers and other new technologies, but the Army still does many things the same as it did during the days of Bunker Hill.

Although Army ceremonies and traditions remain constant the role that the Army plays in

Street Talk

"What is your impression of the University of Nebraska hiring of ex-Raider coach Bill Callahan to coach the Cornhuskers?"

Spc. Adam Talbott

Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion

"I think it's just tough for us Nebraskans to comprehend such a renovation to our program. I think it's a really good decision because our program really wasn't going anywhere"



Staff Sgt. Paul Smedra

267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance)

"At the time it was correct, but firing all the assistants wasn't right."



Sgt. Mike Brickner

267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance)

"Personally, anyone who goes from 7-7 to 10-3 should be given another chance."



Pfc. Nick Vancura

Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion

"He's got a lot on his resume and I think he can do a lot for the University of Nebraska. But he just doesn't look good in red yet."



Pfc. Weseley Goeden

Company B, 735th Transportation Battalion

"I kind of wanted to see Bo Pellini stay there. I thought Bo was pretty fired up. We'll see how Callahan does."



Sgt. Scott Wilke

267th Ordnance Company (Direct Support Maintenance)

"Frank Solich had the highest winning percentage, but it is ultimately up to the A.D. I think he was doing a good job."



Leaders in excellence

Good organizations are recognized by their published performance.

For the Nebraska Military Department, our recruiting and retention, ability to obligate funds as planned, meeting aircraft readiness rates and on-time performance in submitting homeland security information are just a few of the many metrics used to assess our performance.

The rewards for being a good organization are usually less scrutiny and a propensity for greater trust from oversight organizations.

Organizations become great because of things employees do without receiving recognition.

These things take at least two forms. Employees willing to stretch beyond time honored and accepted practices to improve processes are worth their weight in gold. But the other end of the spectrum is just as important. Employees that work to do more than just meet standard and apply that little extra "gleam" to their work are just as valuable.

Taking the easy way out is always tempting with all the pressures we face in the hectic world since 9/11.

Let me give you three examples and you decide if the Nebraska Military Department is an excellent organization.

At a deployed location unit

supply sergeants began requisitioning items not in the table of allowances for their units for dubious purposes. Unfortunately, these items are ending up in private hands and there might even be black market implications.

Virtually every unit at the base is implicated except one—you guessed it. The Nebraska Army National Guard supply sergeant refused to go along with this escapade.

I received a forwarded e-mail from National Guard Bureau last week. It seems Air Guard units from all states were required to submit a special report containing new requirements. States had to research the changes in order to correctly prepare and submit the reports.

Two states did the report correctly—Nevada and guess who? Our Air Guard folks took a little extra time to make sure the report was accomplished correctly the first time.

Each state is required to submit a homeland security strategic plan generated from information received from local governmental entities. It's a daunting task with not much time allotted to pull together infor-

The Adjutant General

Major General

Roger P. Lempke



mation from all corners of the state. The due date for getting the plan to U.S. Department of Homeland Security is Jan. 31.

There is at least one state with a plan ready to submit—guess which one?

So you decide if we are an excellent organization or not. Remember, these are just examples of what happens every day by Military Department employees.

Homestation Demobilizations

The most exciting thing for me in December was the home station de-mobilization accomplished for nearly 70 soldiers coming off air base security duty—Operation Armored Falcon.

Instead of bus trips to and from Fort Carson and a lot of sitting around over a two week period, this group was de-mobilized in a little over four days. We not only got the soldiers back their families and jobs, but saved a bunch of money too.

With three units coming back from Kuwait and Iraq early this year after a full year in theater we want their de-mobilization to be thorough, but as short as possible.

Nebraska is leading the way in demonstrating the home station de-mobilization concept. It will help our soldiers and their families and those in other states as the idea catches on.

Callahan seems to be good fit for Huskers

2004 is definitely starting off with a bang.

We've seen additional mobilizations. We've started looking forward to the return of Guard soldiers from the Middle East and the Balkans.

We've watched as a mad cow scare caused much concern throughout our state and we've seen the start of the Presidential election year and all that means.

We've also seen snow... lots and lots and lots and lots of snow (by the way, I'm still looking for a snowblower.)

But this isn't about any of that. It's about something...at least in the minds of some Nebraskans... that's much more important. It's about Cornhusker football, the recent firing of long-time coach Frank Solich and the hiring of former Oakland Raider head coach Bill Callahan to "resurrect" this state's most valued resource.

People who aren't from Nebraska probably are wondering how we can possibly lump the firing/hiring of a college football coach with these other issues that, in comparison, seem so much more important.

What they don't understand, though, is that nothing captures or influences this state's psyche more than the state's namesake football program. It's an identity people wear on their red-and-white jerseyed sleeves everyday.

And it really is about more than wins and losses. It's about substance over style...doing things the right way. It's about tradition and it's about the

My Turn

Editor, *Prairie Soldier*

Kevin J. Hynes



in Nebraska and nationally, felt had grown increasingly stagnant the past few years. And if nothing else, that's a good thing.

Callahan's recruiting abilities are reportedly legendary and what he accomplished over the first three weeks of his employment here did nothing to diminish this reputation.

Granted, there were a few long-shot recruiting attempts that resulted in runner-up finishes, but there seems to be a real positive electricity to the atmosphere surrounding Memorial Stadium this February that hasn't been felt for some time. Again, that's a good thing.

There are still many challenges facing Callahan and this team this year. New coach. New staff. New offense. Higher expectations brought on by the statements of Nebraska Athletic Director Steve Pedersen. Recruiting battles that need to be fought and this time won.

Callahan, in his short time in Nebraska, looks and sounds like a good match. He reportedly has a good, clear sense of where he wants to go with this team and a plan on how he wants to get there. He also has done good job of communicating that plan to the state.

Ultimately, the decision from the state jury will be made by what happens on the field where Callahan's ability to recruit, educate and call plays will intersect. For now, he deserves this state's support and patience.

He now has it from this particular fan.

meaning behind the effort rather than the result.

So, when somebody starts "messaging around" with the program – something that hasn't happened in over 40 years — its repercussions are felt across the state. Count me as in as one of those fanatics.

Anyone from Nebraska serving in the military knows that whenever you travel someplace and you mention where you're from to a fellow service member, one of the first things you're identified with is the Cornhuskers.

If you didn't have pride in the team before that happened, you do shortly after.

That's part of the reason why, over the past three months, I've felt everything from jubilation over the Nebraska win at Colorado, to disbelief and anger at Solich's firing two days later, to deepening anger over the process of finding a new coach, to relief when Callahan was found, back to anger with the firing of the assistant staff that had been together just one year, back to relief with the completion of this year's recruiting class.

I also have on numerous occasions quite loudly and vocally voiced my feelings over these particular "issues."

But that's in the past now.

Callahan's hiring seems to be bringing a new feeling to a program that many, both here

Guard gets marathon as race name changes

By **Spc. Katrina Bieck**
Staff Writer

In the past, the National Guard has been one of the primary supporters of the Lincoln Marathon.

The Guard is taking that support one step farther this year by becoming a title sponsor of the event.

What does that mean?

"By the National Guard becoming a title sponsor for the Lincoln Marathon, it will gain national recognition for the National Guard marathon program and give the Guard a race comparable to those of other service branches," said Sgt. 1st Class Jack Murphy, the coordinator for the National Guard "All Guard" Marathon Team.

"Now we will be on an equal level with other marathons such as the Air Force Marathon, Navy Marathon, Marine Corps Marathon and the Army Ten Miler," said Murphy. "Until now, we were the only branch of the service who didn't have our name on the title of a marathon."

The name will be changing

■ Lincoln marathon changes include name change, first military team title for first time in 27-year history

from the "Lincoln All Sport Marathon" to the "Lincoln All Sport/National Guard Marathon" for the 27th annual marathon to be held May 2.

Murphy said that the Guard couldn't have picked a better year to become a title sponsor of the event. This marathon will mark the 20th anniversary of the National Guard's participation in the Lincoln Marathon.

Since the start of the National Guard's marathon program, the Lincoln Marathon has been the site of the National Guard "All Guard" Marathon Team trials. Guard members from all 50 states and 4 United States territories attend recruiting and retention workshops and also compete for a place on the "All Guard" team.

"Runners who have been interested in joining the "All Guard" team know that the Lincoln Marathon is a quality race. Now that the Guard is a title

sponsor, we will hopefully draw more members of the armed forces to this event," said Murphy.

Murphy said he thinks being a title sponsor of a marathon will give the Guard more credibility and ultimately enhance the recruiting and retention goals of the National Guard marathon program.

One avenue in which Murphy said he hopes to gain the interest of service members is with a military team division competition at the marathon.

"This will be the first year the Lincoln Track Club will have a first place award for a military team," said Murphy. "This award is open to service members of all branches of the military."

The Lincoln Track Club was the founder of the Lincoln Marathon 27 years ago and has been the primary sponsor of the event. Nancy Sutton, the co-director for the Lincoln Track

Club for the last 17 years said, she was thrilled that the Guard was taking on a bigger role for the marathon.

"I don't think a regular runner will see the name change as a reason to come, but I think it will draw in more military runners to the event," said Sutton.

Sutton added that the race will still have the good qualities that were present before the name change, for example an accurate and safe course.

"Lincoln is a friendly city to run in," said Sutton. "Those things won't change."

The Guard has been working closely with the track club since it began its marathon program, said Sutton.

According to Murphy, the track club has many volunteers who give up countless hours to help with the marathon, but the majority of manpower and support is made up of Nebraska National Guardsmen. Guard

volunteers are responsible for running the finish line, providing a medical tent, helping out at water stations, and setting-up and tearing-down the finish line. The Nebraska Army Guard's 43rd Army Band also volunteers to play the National Anthem and old favorites to keep the crowds pumped up.

"This year the Guard members who are working at the marathon will be able to say they are working for a Guard event, instead of supporting someone else's event," said Murphy. "I think it will build their morale and give the Guard more recognition."

Along with more recognition for the Guard, Murphy said his biggest goal is to eventually have military attendance comparable to the Air Force and Navy marathons.

"We are looking at these changes in the long-term," said Murphy. "We understand that this being our first year word will need to be spread about our marathon. Hopefully as time goes on, it will grow more each year."

All-Guard runners sprint to sign up new members at Vegas race

By **Spc. Katrina Bieck**
Staff Writer

Members of the National Guard "All Guard" Marathon team spent three days in "sin city" trying to convince people that the big payoff wasn't to be found in slot machines or on a blackjack table, but through endless opportunities for jobs, travel and college money that is available for members of the National Guard.

The "All Guard" team traveled to Las Vegas for the Las Vegas Marathon Jan. 25, 2004, where it competed with about 6,000 runners in the half and full marathons. They also traveled with the expectations of attempting to recruit every athlete participating in the two events.

"If there are 5,000 people participating in an event, we should be able to get 5,000 names of possible recruits for the Guard," said 2nd Lt. Louis Longhenry, a reconnaissance survey officer with the Ohio National Guard's Headquarters Battery 1-134th Field Artillery. "Even if they are too old or unqualified, they should see our booth and want to join the Guard."

"We put a lot of enthusiasm and energy into working the booth, but when you have a great product like the National Guard, it sells itself," said Longhenry.

Longhenry and the 23 other members of the team focused most of their effort toward recruiting during the Vegas Marathon.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Jack Murphy, National Guard Marathon Team coordinator, some of the runners were battling injuries and trying to prepare for next month's Navy marathon at Pensacola, Fla., so the main goal in Nevada was to obtain leads and get recognition for the Guard.

That's exactly what the team did. While manning the "All Guard Marathon Team booths at the Vegas Marathon Exposition, the Guard runners managed to obtain approximately 250 leads for the program — the most leads the team has been able to get at a single event.

"Recruiting and retention is the meat and potatoes of the marathon program. Without the expo booths and the leads obtained through the program, we wouldn't have a marathon program," said Murphy.

Staff Sgt. Mike Wells, an instructor with the Nebraska Army National Guard's 2-209th Regional Training In-



Photo by Spc. Katie Bieck

Spreading The Word: Staff Sgt. Christopher Cover, a member of Vermont's Army National Guard, talks to a potential recruit about the benefits of joining the Guard while working at the Guard exposition booth at the Las Vegas Marathon, Jan. 24, 2004. While competing in Las Vegas the "All Guard" team was able to obtain over 250 leads for local and national recruiters.

stitute, said he believes the leads gained from the marathons have a greater importance now than in the past due to the mobilizations the Guard has seen recently.

"The regular Army is depending on the Guard for support in order to complete their missions," said Wells. "With a lot of our units overseas, it is important to spread the word and reach new recruits."

"The kind of people we meet at these events are the type of recruits we want," said Wells. "If they are healthy and energetic enough to run 26 miles, it is pretty much a given that they are in good shape. When you are in good shape, it makes it that much easier to complete the mission at hand."

"Guard numbers are hurting right now," said Longhenry. "When recruiting, it only makes sense to recruit people who have a commitment to life-long fitness."

Longhenry and Wells, All-Guard runners, were two of the top workers for producing leads at the expo. Both said that they use the free stuff the Guard hands out to draw people to the booth.

"When you are face to face with people, they usually listen to what you have to say," said Wells.

"Even if people are not interested in joining, we are getting a lot of recognition," said Longhenry. "People from all over travel to Vegas for vacation. They see us in our uniforms and ask us questions while walking down the street. The marathon program is helping to make people more aware of the Guard's presence."

According to 1st Sgt. Ron Marshall, first sergeant for the Nebraska Army National Guard's 189th Transportation Company and member of the support staff, the marathon program could just be the tip of the iceberg for recruiting leads.

"Anytime we can get exposed to the community, it will help enhance the public's belief in how vital the Guard is," said Marshall, a former Army recruiter who has spent the better part of his professional life trying to convince young people to join the Guard.

"At just four or five events this year, the team has gathered 1,165 leads for recruiters around the nation," said Marshall. "Now how's that for getting the word out about the Guard?"

To maximize their effectiveness, the runners work in two teams of two at the expo booths during three-hour shifts. While one person gathers information,

the other reels in potential recruits with free items.

"Every lead we get is a quality lead," said Longhenry. "We don't just try for large numbers, everyone on our list should be highly qualified."

Another important group of people who work with the marathon team is the support staff. "Many times the support staff is overlooked, but without them there wouldn't be a team," said Murphy.

Sgt. Trina Garrett from the Nebraska National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters has been supporting the marathon for more than two years. Garrett has attended more than 15 marathons with the team and has seen the changes the team has gone through since she joined the support staff.

"Our main objective is to get the word out about the Guard, and have a fun time doing it," said Garrett. "The runners are more oriented to gathering recruits at marathons now. In the past we didn't push recruiting as much, but with what's going on in the world today, we see a greater need for it."

"The runners really get enthused about recruiting at the booth and do a good job," said Garrett. "They make it look a lot easier than it is. When I work the booth before the runners get there, I think it is hard to get people to talk to you. The runners just jump right out there and chase down the leads."

Harold Carlson, a retired family man from Las Vegas who came to the expo and marathon to watch his son run, was one of the many people the Guard runners chased down. Although Carlson is too old to join the military, he was interested in what the Guard could offer his son.

"The booth is very effective and a great way to get the word out about the military," said Carlson. "You can see the energy and enthusiasm the members (of the Guard) working the booth have. It shows that they care about the Guard and that it must be a fun job to have."

Marshall said Carlson is just one person, but he's indicative of the success the Guard Marathon Team is having in helping open up new avenues of recruiting that didn't exist before.

"There is always someone who knows someone who needs a job, money for college, or just wants to serve their country or help in one way or another," said Marshall. "It's the marathon team's job to seek out those people and sign them up for the Guard."

"The Guard is the best kept secret around because people don't know what it has to offer."

Top Shot

Nebraska Army Guard airborne trooper top gun at international sniper matches

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

A self-described former farmboy and future financier shot his way to the top in November. Nebraska Army National Guardsman, Sgt. Dave Kroupa, recently earned top honors during the Third Annual U.S. Army International Sniper Championships held at Fort Benning, Ga., while leading his team to the international title.

Not too shabby for a little more than two weeks of work.

Kroupa, a member of the Nebraska Army Guard's 134th Infantry Detachment (Long Range Surveillance), had just returned home after serving on active duty for nearly a year in support of the Bosnian peace-keeping effort when he received a phone call from his commander, Capt. Gordon Bjorman.

The phone call wasn't about a unit issue. Rather, Bjorman, who serves as the state marksmanship coordinator, was calling Kroupa to gauge his interest in competing as a last-minute fill-in at the upcoming international sniper championships.

According to Bjorman, the war in Iraq had left the National Guard marksmanship team in a lurch when the vast majority of the National Guard Sniper School staff were deployed to the Middle East to teach a sniper school for members of the 101st Airborne Division.

"It left a vacuum of trained snipers in the National Guard," said Bjorman. "Fortunately, we had just returned from our deployment. We had not really hit the radar yet."

"Someone back at Camp Robinson, Ark., remembered that we were back and called to see if we had any trained snipers that would be interested in filling in on a team on short notice," he said.

Perfect Fit

One name immediately stuck out.

"Sergeant Kroupa is one of those special kinds of Nebraskans," said Bjorman. "He grew up hunting, fishing and he's one of the smartest and brightest people we have in the unit."

"He takes big challenges and excels," he added. "He'd gone into competitions while we were in Bosnia and excelled. This included such things as a bench press competition, a 100 kilometer run and a 30 kilometer road march."

Not surprisingly, Kroupa – noticeable soft-spoken Soldier – immediately volunteered.

Kroupa said the chance to shoot against the Army's and the world's best was simply too good to pass up.

"I've shot pretty much since I've been able to hold a gun," said Kroupa, who grew up on a farm near Pierce, Neb., before going to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to pursue a degree in Finance. "I grew up on a farm, so the opportunity (to shoot) was always there."

Kroupa first became involved in the sniper field in 2001 when he was selected from his unit to attend the Army National Guard sniper school at Camp Robinson, earning the distinctive "B-4" designation as an accredited sniper.

Kroupa said he realized that he had a lot of work to accomplish in an extremely short amount of time.

Two weeks before the Georgia matches, Kroupa traveled to Arkansas to begin training with his new teammate. Interestingly enough, the two soldiers – who had never met – had a lot in common.

Spc. Kris Hector was also a native Nebraskan who'd served on active duty in the Army before transferring into the Nebraska Army Guard around the same time that Kroupa was deploying to Bosnia. His unit? None other than the 134th LRSD.

"I never actually met him," said Kroupa. "By the time we got back from Bosnia, he'd already transferred to the (Colorado Army Guard) Special Forces Group at Fort Carson."

Despite never having worked together, the two soldiers hit it off immediately.

"We clicked together by probably the second day."

Training For The Unknown

While in Arkansas, Kroupa and Hector spent endless hours on the Fort Robinson ranges practicing the variety of different matches they would shoot in at Fort Benning. They also tried to prepare for the unknown.

"We'd practice different scenarios," Kroupa said. "About anything you could think of, we practiced it."

"It was pretty much an all day deal. We got up and we shot until the sun went down."

That attention to detail actually would play a major role in the upcoming competition, but more on that later.

During those short two weeks, Kroupa quickly learned to rely on Hector's experience. Hector, along with being a certified Army sniper, had served as a sniper instructor at Camp Robinson and had also competed in the previous year's international sniper matches where he finished in second place.

"Most snipers will tell you that it doesn't matter if you hate your (partner) or not. You've got to get along during the competition. If you want to do well, you just have to be able to leave all that negativity behind."

In the case of Hector, who would serve as the team spotter, that was easy. "He was full of knowledge and taught me a lot of things," he said. "(Getting along) was pretty easy for us."

Competing Against The World

Before Kroupa knew it, it was time to travel to Fort Benning and compete. Kroupa said that even though he felt confident in his abilities, signing in at the match headquarters and seeing the names of shooters from such places as Great Britain, Canada, Germany and the U.S. active duty Army, was overwhelming.

"I was really intimidated," said Kroupa. "They were mostly people who had combat experience."

The U.S. Army International Sniper Competition is actually a week-long event consisting of 14 total events designed to test the entirety of a sniper's skills. Shooting events included the known and unknown distance shooting.

The unknown distance shoot gave shooters a total of 30 minutes to estimate the distance and successfully engage a total of 10 targets. Finally, the long distance shoot challenged snipers to engage a set of targets from 1,000 yards out.

The "snaps and movers" event was presented during both daylight and nighttime hours, with shooters aiming at a combination of pop-up and moving targets. Then, during the 10-ring team shoot, snipers fired at targets with their observer (aided by a spotting scope) checking for accuracy and instructing on recommended sight adjustment.

Several competitions were heavy on field craft prowess and marksmanship. For example, during the stalking portion, snipers employed the additional advantage of concealment while engaging their targets. Later, they had to



Photo courtesy of Arkansas Air National Guard

Top Guns: Spc. Kris Hector (left) and Sgt. Dave Kroupa talk about a target while lying behind an obstacle during the 3rd U.S. Army International Sniper Championships.

employ range estimation skills to estimate the distance (beginning at 130 meters) of targets downrange. And those targets—consisting of soda pop cans, car doors, old tires and traffic signs—were not as easy to detect as ordinary pop-ups.

During the target detection exercise, snipers were required to identify, target and locate specific targets using their individual ability to gather and use battlefield information. For the keep in memory portion, they were physically stressed by doing push-ups, sit-ups, and running while being shown pictures of their targets, then having to engage each target from memory.

Kroupa said that the match typically consisted of two events per day.

"It's mentally draining," he said. "You have to focus and concentrate so many times throughout the day."

"That takes a lot out of you."

Kroupa served as the team's primary sniper, meaning that he typically was the one who took the shot. Hector served as the team spotter, which meant that he was responsible for spotting targets, gauging the ranges and wind conditions and then giving shooting adjustments. He, too, was scored on his shooting skills, however, he used a modified M-16 rifle instead of the standard sniper weapon.

Initially, Kroupa said that he and Hector had little idea of how well they were stacking up. They were simply trying to keep afloat.

"It was pretty warm in comparison to Nebraska, especially in November," said Kroupa, adding that day-time temperatures typically hovered in the 80s.

"It was chilly in the morning, but it got hot in the afternoon...especially during the stalk competition."

Around the third day of the match, the team scores were posted. To the their surprise, the Nebraskans were in second place.

"We didn't know who was in front of us," said Kroupa. "We were pretty optimistic that we were at least going to get into the top five. That was kind of our goal going in...do well and hopefully fall somewhere in the top five."

"Once we saw that we were second, it was kind of a 'Hey, let's go win this thing.'"

In The Hunt

The other shooters noticed as well. At the beginning of the competition, Kroupa said that he and Hector were essentially ignored. Once the scores were posted, though, they became a focal point for questions from the other shooters.

Kroupa said the key to doing well was simple. Don't screw up.

"In this particular competition, it comes down to the fact that you can't have an event where you score zero or two or three events where you score really low," he said. "You don't have to be really, really great in every event. You just have to be a little above average."

"That's what we did."

Did they ever. Kroupa and Hector

won both the 1,000 yard match and the target detection contest. The 1,000 yard shoot, Kroupa said, made a big difference.

"That was one thing that we practiced quite a bit getting good data on the 1,000 yard distance," he said, adding that they won the event by more than 50 points. "We scored well above everybody else in the 1,000 yard shoot. A lot of people scored zeros."

Another factor was the variety of practice the two Nebraskans conducted. During a bumpy ride between events, Hector suffered a large gash above his left eye that would eventually require 16 stitches to close. He completed the event before receiving medical attention.

The key, Hector told reporters after the event, was the fact that he had practiced spotting at Fort Robinson using both eyes instead of just one.

Kroupa said it showed that the hours of practice on the Arkansas ranges had been worth it.

"We practiced every single thing that you could think of," he said. "A lot of things that came up, like shooting in some of the events that they had set up, we'd already practiced that."

Going into the final evening of the matches, Kroupa said that he felt good about how his team had done.

But was it enough?

"When they announced our names...that's when we knew," said Kroupa.

The Nebraskans finished first, narrowly beating a team from the Arkansas Air National Guard...one of three Guard teams that finished in the top four. Kroupa also earned the "Top Gun" award as the top scoring shooter.

"It was kind of unbelievable," said Kroupa. "It felt great."

Television Appearance

Along with the awards, Kroupa and Hector became media celebrities as well. The *Atlanta Constitution* covered the match and featured the two shooters in a story published later. So did the *Omaha World Herald*.

The *Outdoor Life Network* also covered the event, televising the competition on Jan. 26. Kroupa said it was fun watching the event through the eyes of the camera and seeing parts of the match that he didn't while he was there.

As far as seeing himself on television? "No big deal."

His parents, however, reacted differently. "They were probably more excited about it," he said. "Seeing me on TV, they were really, really impressed."

"I think my dad has talked about it to every stranger he meets," added Kroupa. "It kind of embarrasses me."

Kroupa said that after graduating from UN-L this spring, he plans on attending Ranger School. He hopes to be home in time to compete again in next year's match.

"There's nothing tougher than winning it, except winning it again," he said. "That's definitely harder. Hopefully I can get a chance to try."